

# GERMANY

## *From Defeat to Conquest*

1913—1933

by

W M KNIGHT-PATTERSON

Foreword by

LORD VANSITTART

London

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*“ Germany must not and cannot be destroyed,  
her world mission on behalf of mankind  
stands firm and she will accomplish it. I am  
not speaking of revenge, far from it, but our  
enemies must beware ; they have won the  
war but they can lose the peace.”*

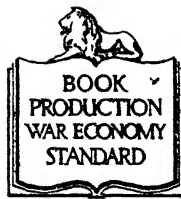
Speech addressed to the German Delegation to  
the Peace Conference at Versailles on May 28th,  
1919, by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau (Minister  
of Foreign Affairs of the Weimar Republic and  
head of the delegation)

From “ DOKUMENTE UND GEDANKEN UM VER-  
SAILLES ”—by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, Berlin,  
1925, page 81



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## FOREWORD

THIS is a book of remarkable accuracy and insight, and therefore of remarkable utility. It is also the best compendium of revealing facts that I have yet encountered. Its scholarly author is to be greatly commended, and I shall be paying him no unmerited compliment when I say that this book should be put into the hands of every teacher in this country. I hope too that it will find its own way into the hands of all students, whether in schools or universities or thereafter, whether in this country or in the United States, who recognise that safety resides in Truth.

"Ignorance, madam, pure ignorance," on the part of the English-speaking democracies is precisely what has let them in unarmed for two German World Wars, in which democracy has been well-nigh extinguished, and the "purer" that ignorance—or silliness or prejudice—the more deadly has been its effect upon us, the more outstanding its service to the aggressors. Everyone who thinks that the Germans are as other people, only misled, is an enemy of other people. If you want to see why and how they are unlike, you have only to look anywhere in this book and yield to the evidence like an honest man, instead of listening to the pan-German "democratic" propagandists, who have infiltrated this country and the United States in mid-war—one of the most cunning and daring manœuvres ever executed.

Britain and the United States go periodically insane about Germany and Germans. Well do I remember, for example, the mad junketings that marked the Locarno Agreement. Such rushes to the head of compliments, and to the mouth of banquets, to the hand of gold fountain pens! And all banking upon the good faith of that double-crosser Stresemann, the "good German" of his day. I said at the time that this hysteria would end in the discredit of the participants. You are always ditched if you put trust in "such as do build their faith upon the holy text of the pike and gun."

Should you think the statement too strong, read this

book, above all the dialogue of Stresemann with Briand at Thoiry, in which the latter was reduced to trying to borrow money from Germany, because the Americans were so much more willing to lend to the vanquished aggressor than to the victorious victim. If that isn't a mad world, what is ?

But read the Thoiry dialogue again from another point of view, and it is only one of a thousand points in this book. I knew Briand well. No statesman was ever kinder to young men, or had a sweeter nature. He was, moreover, a spell-binder whose " golden voice " concealed a dearth of substance, indeed " ignorance, pure ignorance " of an alarming kind. He just didn't read ; he took more in by the ear than by the eye, like our own most famous statesman of his day. (I attended many conferences with them, and what a disquieting and attractive pair they were !). Briand emerges from the Thoiry dialogue as what he was, a lovable dupe. Stresemann emerges also as what he was, a typical German, " good " or otherwise, a Nobel Peace Prize winner bent on forcing every pace of acquisition, and all the time preparing, behind brazen mendacity, for the new Day when he would again be able to take by force.

Lord Macaulay used, I suspect, to write " every schoolboy knows " of facts which he had only just learned himself. " Every schoolboy knows who imprisoned Montezuma and who strangled Atahualpa." After the publication of this book every schoolboy and every school teacher should know who twice tried to strangle humanity. The answer is : *all* parties in the German nation. Here is the proof and the story. Its facts show clearly the monster that we shall confront for many years after this war, the prolonged effort and vigilance necessary to tame it.

*Vansittart.*

*"To all who died in vain in 1914-1918"*

## PREFACE

THE well known French jurist, L. Duguit, has said that every State is composed of the governing and the governed. As a comment on this observation it may be said that each State contains a group of political people who are distinguished from the mass of the population by the fact that it is they who, by virtue of their social function, influence the political life of their community and are able to contribute to the activation of the currents of public opinion. This political group comprises not only the leading members of the political parties—Ministers as well as Opposition leaders—but also the secretaries of the numerous local branches of the various trade unions, high-ranked officers, high officials, the clergy, professors and schoolmasters, journalists, the heads of industrial combines and banks, etc. There can be no doubt that in order to analyse the political trends of a national community or foresee its reactions in the future, it is incomparably more important to be acquainted with the mentality or mentalities of this large political group than the generally vague sentiments of the mass of the governed, whether they belong to the working class or the middle or lower middle class.

If we apply this criterion to Germany, we shall find considerable divergencies of opinion among the political class, frequently amounting to antagonism. In Germany, as elsewhere, some members of this class are for social progress, others fiercely conservative, some are devout churchmen, others free-thinkers, some are anti-Semitic, while others have a predilection for Heine and Mendelssohn, some are in favour of parliamentary democracy, while others prefer a totalitarian régime. These divergencies of opinion are normal in any live society.

However, a closer study of Germany, embracing the trend of political evolution in the 19th and 20th centuries, will reveal a striking phenomenon: a single dominant

factor affecting all strata of the political class. All divergencies of opinion are subordinated to this single dominant factor, which consists in a fierce and narrow nationalism. It is not our intention to analyse here the causes of this collective phenomenon. There are those who attribute it to economic causes, to the fact that Germany, having developed a powerful industry, and being dependent on foreign countries both for raw materials and markets, has succumbed to the temptation of seizing political control of the territories from which she could import raw materials, as well as of those to which she could export industrial goods. Others see the chief cause in an explosion of national energy arising from the unification of the German States into a single Reich and stimulated, before 1914, by a rapid increase of population. Still others seek the cause in German political thought, which in the 19th and 20th centuries has been increasingly tending towards imperialism and a policy of force. Again, some people ascribe the evil to the moral influence of heavy industry, high officialdom, the corps of officers and the political writers. No doubt, there is a multiplicity of causes, as is the case with all social phenomena ; but the fact remains that nearly the entire German political class was intoxicated with a morbid nationalism constituting a danger to the rest of the world, for that class had at its disposal 70 million people and the powerful war potential represented by heavy industry. The disease of nationalism, from which other nations have also suffered at various periods in their history, progressively assumed an alarming aspect in Germany. It reached its first paroxysm in 1914, when all the political parties rallied round the Kaiser. It survived defeat, corroding the new Republic as well. True, there was a small minority that had escaped the disease. But this sometimes truly courageous minority became submerged in the flood of nationalism. It had no hold on the mass of the governed. Even in November, 1918, it failed to seize the spiritual helm in Germany. Some of them resisted the contagion of nationalism right to the end—they were assassinated, like Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Kurt Eisner. Others—the majority—wavered, allowed themselves to be contaminated, and finally passed into the opposite camp, like most of the Independent

Socialists who, in 1922, joined the opportunists of the Majority Socialist Party. Even the Communists were obliged to assimilate themselves to their environment and sometimes—sincerely or otherwise—indulged in nationalistic diatribes. The bourgeois parties—the Democrats, whose founders included the Pan-German Naumann, whose members included Hjalmar Schacht, and which in 1930 amalgamated with the “Jungdeutscher Orden,” an ultra-nationalist association; the Centre, one of whose leaders, Dr Bruening, inaugurated the dictatorial régime in Germany, while another, von Papen, opened the way to power for Adolf Hitler; Stresemann’s People’s Party, one of whose members, General von Seeckt, Reichstag Deputy in 1930-1932, was the creator of the modern German Army; Dr Hugenberg’s German Nationals, and Adolf Hitler’s National Socialists—all these were linked together by a powerful bond: nationalism. It was a very different thing from plain patriotism, representing as it did the will to conquer foreign lands, impose German control on foreign peoples, and secure for the Reich a dominant position in the world. It was a militant nationalism, whose aim was to win a place in the sun for Germany by relegating other nations to oblivion.

A masterly analysis of this specifically German nationalism is contained in a book by a German author (Friedrich Hertz: *Nationalgeist und Politik*, Zuerich, 1937, Vol. I), from which we quote the most interesting passages:

“... The essential character of modern German nationalism was chiefly moulded by the tradition and structure of the Prussian military State. The latter itself changed in the process from a dynastic-aristocratic to a national form. Frederick the Great was elevated to a national divinity in a manner unknown to any other nation. His example became the supreme national dogma. The military character of the new German Empire gradually influenced all spheres of national life, fostering an intense nationalism everywhere. This was rendered possible by universal conscription and compulsory education, which Prussia introduced before any other State. But both these institutions produced different effects in Prussia from the rest of Europe. Thus the German Ambassador in Paris, Count Muenster, on June 21, 1891, reported to the Reich Chancellor that conscription had increased the self-confidence of the French nation, but not its martial spirit. ‘Thank God, conscription has acted differently from what it has done with us.’ The causes must be sought in the divergence of the national structures—the tradition of the martial Kingdom and martial aristocracy of Prussia. The officer in Germany, as the rentier in France, became the national ideal. Anyone who was

not at least a reserve officer, was regarded as a second-rate human being. What an officer's uniform could do in Germany, was illustrated in a grotesque manner by the case of the Captain of Koepenik. It is said that it was a famous scientist who proudly proclaimed that the German professors were the 'scientific life-guard of the Hohenzollerns.' Again, in no other country in the world was it the custom for students to have to prove their martial courage through scars and duelling.

"The German students were not a little proud of the scars on their faces and looked with contempt on comrades who resisted this custom. The Protestant Church, which among other Teutonic nations exerted such a mighty influence in favour of peace, also served to a considerable extent to foster a martial ethos in Germany. Of course, those nationalists who tried to revive the old Teutonic Paganism, because they had realised that Christianity could not be brought into harmony with their mentality, were more honest. Even a world-citizenship movement like Freemasonry mostly sailed in nationalistic waters in Germany. Whereas among other nations sport, sociability, youth and women's movements were mostly non-political and super-national, in Germany the athletic, mountaineering and music clubs and youth and women's associations were gradually drawn into the wake of nationalism. But the national sentiments of anyone participating in the peace movement were regarded as highly suspect. As a rule, he was barred from a career as an official and as a University professor, as well as from good society . . ."

"... Even the art that seems to be furthest removed from politics—music—was placed into the service of nationalism. One of the most powerful forces in disseminating this spirit, was Wagnerism. Whether Wagner himself was a true nationalist, is doubtful. The content of his incomparable work can also not be described as nationalistic. But the influence Wagner acquired through it, and above all, the circle that gathered round Wagner, acted in that direction. It was here that racialism was first fostered, the conviction that the Teutons, and particularly the Germans, were superior to all other nations, and therefore destined for world dominion, at least in the spiritual sense." (p. 450-451)

This disease of nationalism—for how else can adoration of one's own nation and hatred, contempt or at least disregard for all others be described?—had penetrated deeply into the organism of the German political class. Beyond and above all social, economic and moral conflicts of opinion, there was always the one dominant idea that everything must be sacrificed for the welfare and greatness of the Reich. In order to secure power for the Reich, all parties were generous with the Army. The Imperial Army, and later the Republican Reichswehr, dominated the political scene, for they were the favoured product of German nationalism. Besides the Army, a preponderant political influence in support of the nationalist frenzy was wielded by heavy industry, whose permanent role was to

supply arms to the generals and the troops. The magnates of the coal, steel, chemical and electrical industries pulled the wires, both under the Empire and under the Republic, far more frequently than the German elector could have suspected. The squire class—the Junkers—representing the nursery of the Prussian officer caste, exulted in this unhealthy atmosphere, and garnered its fruits in the form of the notorious *Osthilfe*, whereby many millions of marks were transferred from the coffers of the Republic into the pockets of the big landowners. The writers, journalists, politicians, professors, schoolmasters, pastors and priests all joined in this *danse macabre*, as a result of which Germany, and with her the whole world, has been plunged into the abyss of war twice within a single generation.

“Deutschland ueber Alles”—the national anthem under the Republic as well as under the Empire—drowned the voices of a Karl Liebknecht, a Karl Ossietzky, or a Helmuth von Gerlach. They were sacrificed to the Moloch of nationalism. Moreover, the November Revolution was also squandered by the Socialists to please the same idol, which demanded ever new victims and new sacrifices.

With Adolf Hitler the disease reached its crisis. Will it disappear after the present war? Is it likely that a social disease whose origins already date back a century, and which has survived the defeat of 1918, a disease that has contaminated nearly the entire political class of Germany, whatever their political or social credo, will suddenly disappear? Could we consider a “revolution” in Germany as a sure sign of recovery? After all, there was a revolution in November, 1918, yet the disease only became aggravated. That revolution broke out not to stop the war, but because the war had been lost. In 1939, as in 1914, we all waited with bated breath for the revolution that would prevent Germany from unleashing war. We waited in vain. On August 4, 1914, all the political parties, without exception, rallied round the Kaiser and flung themselves joyously, exultantly, into the war; in 1939, millions of Germans marched obediently, without a single known case of indiscipline or hesitancy. Many of us expected the Germans to revolt over the atrocities committed against the subjugated nations of Europe, and we also expected this in 1942, when the extermination of the Jews was begun.



But no one in Germany made a move or even voiced a protest. Now that the German armies are crushed, as they were in 1918, and defeat is an accomplished fact, how can we place any trust in a revolution that may break out as an expression of resentment and disillusionment, if not at the same time as a means of escaping responsibility and limiting it to Hitler and his clique? What moral guarantee shall we have before our own consciences if we give prematurely credit to the New Germany, as we did in 1918 and the succeeding years? Who will be in a position to assure, with a tranquil mind, and without the fear of committing a blunder, that in contrast with what happened in 1918, German nationalism will this time vanish for ever? Are we going to repeat the experience of 1918-1939 and risk a third war, for ourselves and our children? Is there anyone who would take such a responsibility upon his conscience?

These questions have been answered in a commonsensible manner by Mr Anthony Eden:

"It would be sheer folly to allow some non-Nazi Government to be set up and then, so to speak, trust to luck."

The following narrative of the events that took place between 1913 and 1933, which is based on German sources, may serve as a warning, to be remembered on the day when Germany defeated for the second time will again start, as she did after 1918 Armistice, her skilful campaign abroad of gaining sympathy for the "Reich, unjustly and ruthlessly treated by the victors."

Bergson, the French philosopher, said that historical development reminded him of a spiral—epochs of similar general outline regularly recurring in history. "History does not repeat itself, but historical situations recur."<sup>1</sup> The greatest enigma of the future is whether German nationalism after this war will not produce a new edition of the Weimar Republic, which in turn will beget a second Hitler, or if the reader prefers, another William II. This is the great question!

*London—June, 1945.*

<sup>1</sup> E. L. Woodward: *Short Journey*, 1942, p. 143

# Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
Foreword by Lord Vansittart	5
Preface	7
I. PRELUDE TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR	17
<i>Ambitious dreams of German Nationalists. The Nationalistic Propaganda. Bernhardt's "Germany and the Next War." Anti-Semitism. Composition of the Reichstag in 1912. The Military Bill of 1913. Socialist Vote for the War credits. Socialist Vacillation during the period 1870-1914. Majority and Minority at 1913 Party Congress. The Crisis. Socialists establish German War Guilt—July 1914.</i>	
II. FIRST THREE YEARS OF THE WAR	41
<i>Socialists change their minds and rally to National Front. "Necessity knows no Law." Socialists vote for War Loans with other parties Philip Scheidemann. The Intellectuals. Blitzkrieg. Battle of the Marne. War Aims. Karl Liebknecht the only Socialist to vote against second instalment of War credits. Winter Campaign 1914-1915. The Enemy will pay. Reichstag Debate, March 1915. Statements and reports on German War Crimes The Lusitania Case. German Intellectuals and War aims. The German Offensive in the East Socialist War Aims and Collaboration in the National War effort. "Deutsche Gesellschaft 1914." Reichstag Session of December 1914. Mitteleuropa. Socialist Split Debate on the Submarine war. Hindenburg and Ludendorff appointed Supreme Commanders of German Forces. Exploitation of Belgium The Liebknecht Trial Supreme Command's War Aims. Germany's initiative for a negotiated peace. Unrestricted Submarine war. Reichstag Debate on Peace. The U S A. joins the Allies Revolution in Russia Beginning of war-weariness. War Aims as Counter-measure. The growing strength of the Coalition War Aims of the German Admiralty.</i>	
III. "PEACE WITHOUT ANNEXATIONS AND INDEMNITIES." A NEW SLOGAN	100
<i>The 1917 Stockholm Conference of Labour leaders. Attitude of the Majority Socialists. Attitude of the German Independent Socialists at Stockholm. Public exposure of Majority Socialists' hypocrisy. The German Peace offensive of July 1917. Peace initiative of Herr Erzberger. Resignation of Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg. Dr Michaelis. Reichstag Peace Resolution Peace initiative of the Holy See. Counter-offensive of the Militarists The October 1917 Reichstag debate. War aims formulated with a view to a second war. War aims of the heavy industry. Propaganda within the Army. Appointment of a new Chancellor, a "revolution" for the "Vorwaerts." The December 1917 War Loan. Germany rejects Wilson's fourteen Points. Internal situation in Germany.</i>	

# 14 GERMANY FROM "DEFEAT TO CONQUEST"

## CHAPTER

## PAGE

### IV. PEACE TREATIES WITH ANNEXATIONS AND INDEMNITIES

142

*The Russian Revolution. Peace Treaty with the Ukraine. Colonisation in the East. Arthur Balfour on German Militarism. The Naumann-Jaeckh-Bosch report. Ultimatum to Russia. Peace Treaty with Russia. Reichstag debate on Treaty with Russia. German offensive in the West. Reichstag debate on U-Boat Warfare of April, 1918. Peace Treaty with Rumania. Reichstag debate on the Rumanian Treaty. The German May-June offensive in the West. Von Kuehlmann's resignation. The German July offensive at Rheims. The new War Loan. The Allied counter-offensive of July and August, 1918. Supplementary Treaty with Russia.*

### V GERMAN DEFEAT AND REVOLUTION

186

*The Allied Offensives. Consternation at German General Headquarters. Ludendorff establishes a parliamentary régime. Signing of the Armistice. Conservative Policy of revolutionary Government. "The German Army has not been defeated." A. Grzesinski affirms his loyalty to Hindenburg. The true revolutionaries. "Militarism in Germany is finished for ever." Noske accepts post of Executioner. Dr Solf resigns. The Volunteer Corps. Supreme Command creates new anti-revolutionary Army with Socialist support.*

### VI FIRST STEPS OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC. PEACE TREATY. THE CONSTITUTION

239

*Elections to Constituent Assembly. Dissolution of Central Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. "Democracy in Germany assured more than in any other Country." Repudiation of the Revolution. Organisation of the New German Army. Conflict between the Government and workers of the Left. Bloody repression of Berlin disorders. Military Suppression of the Socialist Government in Bavaria. Balance Sheet of Majority Socialist policy. The Peace Terms. Confusion in Germany. Erzberger's moderating influence. Allied Reply to German counter-proposals. Germany divided on question of signing Treaty. German fleet scuttled. National Assembly decides on conditional signature. Allies demand unconditional signature. Groener advises compliance. National Assembly authorises Government to sign unconditionally. "In Germany everything begins and ends—with the Army." Hindenburg resigns. The Republican Constitution. National Assembly demands incorporation of Austria. The Baltic Adventure. Connivance of Republican Government and Military Authorities: German troops against Baltic Governments and the Russian Revolution. Allied Veto. End of the Escapade. Farce of War Criminals. Parliamentary inquiry into events preceding the defeat. The "Stab-in-the-back" legend.*

### VII. REVIVAL OF THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT. RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SOVIET RUSSIA

277

*Bloody repression of Workers' demonstration in Berlin. Split among the Generals. Putsch by Kapp and Von Luetwitz. "The Reichswehr will not fire on the Reichswehr." Workers save Government, Government deserts Workers. 1920 Reichstag elections. Ebert remains President. First Republican Government without the Socialists. The Head of the Reichswehr and his ideas. The Nationalist Organisations. Walter Rathenau. The policy of Fulfilment. The Treaty of Rapallo. Murder of Rathenau. No wars of aggression—until Germany has the means.*

## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

### VIII. THE INFLATION. THE RUHR. CONFLICT BETWEEN THE REICH GOVERNMENT AND SAXONY AND BAVARIA

*Inflation stimulates Nationalism and brings profits to German Capitalists. Cuno Government abandons Peace Treaty "policy of Fulfilment." Disagreement between the Allies. Occupation of the Ruhr. Passive resistance. Centrifugal tendencies in Germany. Stresemann becomes Reich Chancellor with the support of Stinnes and the Socialists. End of passive resistance. Revolt of the Black Reichswehr. Socialist Government of Saxony suppressed by military force. Return of the Ex-Crown Prince. Adolf Hitler and his political program. Bavaria—Promised Land of the Nationalists. Conflict between Bavaria and the Reich. Hitler's coup de force. Reconciliation between the Bavarian and Reich Governments. Fall of Stresemann. Enigmatic Role of General von Seeckt. Marx Government abolishes eight-hour day Abolition of Assize Courts "The pleasure of Playing at Soldiers"*

### IX. THE STRESEMANN ERA. LOCARNO AND THE BERLIN TREATY

*Stresemann's political aims. Normalisation of the internal situation. Favourable attitude of Britain and the U.S.A. Dissolution of the Reichstag. Death of Hugo Stinnes. The Dawes Plan. The new Marx Government Anti-semitism among German Freemasons. "The National Idea is superior." The London Protocol and its Consequences for Germany. The Reich and the League of Nations. "The Interest of the State." Dissolution of the Reichstag and new Elections. Luther Government with German National Participation. Ebert dies Hindenburg elected President. Germans take initiative for Western Pact. Stresemann's real aims. Minorities Campaign of the Weimar Republic. "We must get the stranglehold off our neck." Locarno. Evacuation of the Ruhr and the first Rhineland zone. Stresemann's Heroes. Frederick the Great and Bismarck. Resignation of Luther Government. The Idea of Presidential Dictatorship Luther's new Government. The question of the Flag. Luther followed by Marx. The problem of the Estates of the former Reigning families. Heyday of the Spirit of Locarno in the West. Treaty of Berlin to complement Rhineland Pact. Germany enters the League of Nations. Conversation in Thoiry General von Seeckt resigns. Stresemann and the German Nationals. President Hindenburg's Camarilla.*

### X GERMANY'S MATERIAL AND MORAL REARMAMENT

*The new Marx Government. End of Inter-allied control of German Armaments Revelations of "Scoundrels" on secret German Re-armament. How the Reichswehr solved the Problem of re-armament. Reichswehr collaboration with Soviet Russia and other European countries. Karl Ossietzky, victim of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich Republic's increasing armaments expenditure. German bourgeois parties and Russia. Lord d'Abernon's view. German propaganda. Stresemann on the Small Countries and the British Empire. Osthilfe. Hindenburg becomes Prussian Junker again. "A Nation will be judged and weighed by the personality who stands at its head" Return of Socialists in the Reich Government. Hermann Mueller becomes Chancellor Increasing autonomy for Reichswehr. Monseigneur Kaas. Austrian Affairs. Reichstag Speaker Loebe. The Pact of Paris. Revision of Dawes Plan. Stresemann bangs the table with his fist The Prussian Government and the Socialists. Hitler reorganises his Party with financial aid from the Industrialists. The Stahlhelm and other semi-military organisations. "Playing at Soldiers"*

## CHAPTER

PAGE

## XI. EVACUATION OF THE RHINELAND. REPARATIONS

435

*Evacuation of the Rhineland Zone Reconstruction of the Reich Government The Young Plan. The Hague Conference. Allies decide to evacuate Rhineland on June 30th, 1930. The Young Plan adopted. Death of Stresemann. Young Plan accepted by the Reich despite nationalist agitation. Financial situation of Germany, Britain and France in consequence of the War. Reich's Reparations payments. Was Germany ruined by Reparations? Foreign Loans and the spending craze. Foreign Creditors frustrated. Hilferding again scapegoat of Socialist Opportunism. Bruening becomes chairman of Parliamentary Centre Party. Two examples of Nationalist Frenzy*

## XII. END OF PARLIAMENTARY REGIME. THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

457

*Second Hague Conference and Schacht's resignation. Ratification of Young Plan Hermann Mueller replaced by Bruening. Bruening and Parliament. Events in Prussia Hugenberg saves Bruening. Major Buchrucker versus Hugenberg. Bruening and Parliament. Osthilfe. The dissolution of the Reichstag. Agitation for frontier revision and for the Anschluss of Austria. The question of War guilt Von Seeckt and rearmament. Evacuation of the Rhineland. Dissensions within the Nazi Party. Reichstag elections of September 14th, 1930. Equal Security. German Justice. Two misleading Nazi moves Reichstag Debate The Coming Man? The Crisis. Osthilfe (continued). Navy Budget and split among Socialists Intensification of German Minority Propaganda. Growth of Nationalism. Unsuccessful attempt at Anschluss with Austria. The Saar Problem. Hoover Moratorium and Standstill Agreement. Franco-German Rapprochement. Difficulties with the Prussian Government. German rearmament Growth of National Socialism. Bruening's Second Government The Harzburg Front. Reichstag Debate. Article 48 and the Dictatorial System.*

## XIII. INTERMEZZO. POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF 1932

514

*Presidential Election of 1932. The Reparations Problem. Bruening on relations with Lithuania. Para-military Organizations. Disarmament Conference in Geneva. Germany's Military Budget The electoral campaign First Ballot, March 13th, 1932. Final Ballot, April 10th, 1932 General Groener's Action. Fall of Bruening. Government of von Papen. Papen and the Reichstag The End of Reparations. The Prussian Crisis. Inertia of German Democracy. Papen's and Schleicher's Statements. Hitler's Propaganda The July 1932 Reichstag election. Ban on the word "Republic" Political intrigues. Papen's internal policy. "Jugendertuechtigung." Disarmament at Geneva. Attitude of the Political Parties. Reichstag election of November, 1932. Fall of von Papen. General von Schleicher becomes Reich's Chancellor. Schleicher's Policy. Germany's economic rearmament Equality of rights. Conflict with Bavaria Schleicher's weakness. His fall.*

## XIV. TRIUMPH OF TOTALITARIAN NATIONALISM. HITLER BECOMES REICH CHANCELLOR

565

*First Steps. New Reichstag election of March, 1933. The 1933 Reichstag. Hitler's Decrees Submission of the Weimar Parties to Hitler. Socialists. Attitude of the Free Trade Unions. The Catholic Centre Party. The Concordat of July, 1933. Hitler's intransigence and political emigration. "Equal Rights." Beginning of appeasement policy towards Hitlerite Germany.*

Bibliography

593

Index

608

## CHAPTER I

### PRELUDE TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

*"Gott must be tired of it"*

THIS is how Mr H. G. Wells,<sup>1</sup> in an article written in August 1914, explained why Prussian militarism was an intolerable nuisance in the world :

" Ever since the crushing of the French in 1871 the evil thing has grown and cast its spreading shadow over Europe. Germany has preached a propaganda of ruthless force and political materialism to the whole uneasy world 'Blood and iron,' she boasted, was the cement of her unity, and almost as openly the little, mean, aggressive statesmen and professors who have guided her destinies to this present conflict have professed cynicism and utter disregard of any ends but nationally selfish ends, as though it were religion. Evil just as much as good may be made into a cant. Physical and moral brutality have indeed become a cant in the German mind, and spread from Germany throughout the world. I could wish it were possible to say that English and American thought had altogether escaped its corruption. But now at last we shake ourselves free and turn upon this boasting wickedness to rid the world of it. The whole world is tired of it. And Gott—Gott so perpetually invoked—Gott, indeed, must be very tired of it "

#### *Ambitious Dreams of German Nationalism*

When Mr H. G. Wells wrote the above words, German militarism had flung itself into an adventure from which it hoped to emerge triumphant. Its success against Denmark in 1864, against Austria in 1866, and against France in 1871 had made it believe that it could defy the world and bring it under German political and economic hegemony. The lesson of "blood and iron" taught to the German people by Bismarck had carried them beyond the limits assigned by the political master of Prussian militarism. He only intended that Prussia should achieve preponderance in Germany, and a unified Germany on the Continent, but the generations that followed the Iron Chancellor were intoxicated by his successes and had far greater ambitions. The whole world seemed to be open to their growing appetites. The rapid development of the German Navy,

<sup>1</sup> *The War Illustrated*, August 22, 1914—"Why Britain went to war"

which had been pressed forward by William II and his political and military advisers with feverish haste, seemed to ensure for Germany the possibility of triumph in a world war. The acquisition of colonies and the expansion of the Reich's foreign trade made it appear as though it was a mere matter of picking and choosing—Germany's rulers, as well as her political writers thought, in turns, of the domination of the Continent, of Asia Minor, of the colonies of the small countries—Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands—and of the wealth of South America. Their eyes were greedily scanning the horizon, while their brains were full of ideas as to whom and in what manner to dispossess in order to increase the riches and power of the Reich. A frenetic nationalism made them forget about the rights and interests of other peoples. Germany's rulers allowed themselves to be convinced by nationalist diatribes that Germany was entitled to precedence over other nations and that the latter were inflicting an unheard-of injustice upon her by their unwillingness to offer her their provinces, colonies and other possessions.<sup>1</sup>

The other Great Powers were accused of barring Germany's path in her legitimate development and even of wanting to arrest her expansion through encirclement. Great Britain, France and Russia would not allow the Reich its place in the sun. In their hatred of Germany, which was superior to them in all respects, they refused even the excellent bargain she had offered them, to wit, to divide the world between the Great Powers and let the small countries go to the wall. This contempt for the small nations, bastard child of the Nietzschean contempt for the weak, had taken a firm hold on the minds of the Germans, intoxicated as they were with the rapid growth of the power of their own country. This sentiment prevailed in the Germany of William II, and goes a long way to explain the foreign policy of Hitler, but it had not disappeared even during the Weimar period. As regards the pre-1914 period, the following intermezzo is illuminating on this point: In his account of the conversation which

<sup>1</sup> Chancellor Prince von Bulow, in his Reichstag speech of November 14, 1906, said that it was the task of the German generation to preserve the Continental position that was the basis of Germany's world position, and at the same time to study her overseas interests and conduct her world policy in such a manner that the future of the German people should not be endangered and injured.

the French Ambassador, Jules Cambon, had with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, von Jagow, on April 2, 1914, the Belgian Minister in Berlin reported that

“von Jagow<sup>1</sup> revealed his mind by contending that, owing to the transformation that Europe was undergoing in favour of the stronger nations and the development of new economic forces and means of communication, the smaller States could no longer lead the independent existence which they had hitherto enjoyed. They would either disappear altogether, or gravitate into the orbit of the big Powers.”

In their domestic propaganda the rulers of Germany made considerable use of a slogan that gave the impression to the German people, on the one hand, that other countries were treating it like a Cinderella, and on the other, that its political bosses had no other aim than to secure for it its rightful place in the world, consistent with its grandeur and the superiority of its “Kultur” and its moral and intellectual qualities. The slogan was: “We are heroic and hard-working but ‘poor’.” Hitlerite propaganda was to employ the same slogan, adapting it to modern social concepts, and talking of the nations as “haves and have-nots,” Germany, naturally, being in the latter category, despite her magnificent industry. However, the slogan contained even less truth in the pre-1914 era. The facts show that Germany was certainly not poor. In 1914, Germany’s national wealth was estimated at 310 billion marks. Also, according to Dr Riesser,<sup>2</sup> the well-known German economist, Germany, which was so well able to handle the 5 billions she had taken from France after the victorious campaign of 1870-1871, by 1905 possessed assets abroad amounting to 24-25 billion marks—though Riesser considered this a very conservative estimate. Indeed, another German economist, Steinmann-Bucher, placed the figure as high as 40 billions for 1905. However, even if we take the lowest figure, this would give an annual revenue of 1,362 millions in 1905, and about 2 billions in 1914. Yet campaigns were organised and well financed throughout the world to gain sympathy for a “poor but hard-working Germany.”

<sup>1</sup> See Fernand van Langehove, Permanent Secretary at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Contemporary Review*, London, July, 1942

<sup>2</sup> Dr Riesser, *Die deutschen Grossbanken und ihre Konzentration in Deutschland*, 3rd ed., Gustav Fischer, Jena, 1910.



The above figures indicate the expansion of German economy. Industry took first place in German national life. The political influence of industrial magnates like Krupp, Roechling, Thyssen, von Hoesch, etc., grew all the more because the High Command had every reason to promote industrial development, the *conditio sine qua non* of modern military power. Economic circles, in turn, favoured political imperialism because they wanted to secure control of areas rich in raw materials or in cheap agricultural produce. They wanted the Reich to be completely independent of other countries as regards both. They were hoping that political control of the sources of these two categories of goods would ensure for them an incontestable superiority over their competitors—thanks, on the one hand, to the elimination of all foreign intervention as regards imports, and on the other, to wage-reductions rendered possible by an abundance of cheap food. The plans for territorial acquisition woven by the industrialists fitted in admirably with the nationalistic ambitions of other ruling circles—the High Command, the Junkers, the political writers and the leaders of the political parties.

In all these circles covetous eyes were turned towards the iron mines of Northern France, in which, as early as 1907, the Germans already held a 28·7 per cent. interest, as was also the case with many other French industries. While preoccupied with designs on the French Longwy-Briey Basin, Germany's rulers were also not forgetting the agricultural riches of the Ukraine and Poland, nor the Near East markets that the famous Berlin-Baghdad railway line was to open to them.

However, all these fine plans implied a complete change in the balance of power in Europe and the establishment of German hegemony on the Continent. And the Germans knew their History—and that the similarly ambitious plans of Philip II, Louis XIV and Napoleon were frustrated by the fierce resistance of Great Britain. So, while hoping that Great Britain would stand aside from a Continental conflict, the Germans increased their naval armaments, in order, if necessary, to smash British opposition, and in their propaganda they accused the Power that was to become their most stubborn adversary of denying them a

place in the sun. As to France, the Germans concealed their annexationist plans as regards the industrial North behind a screen of accusations, asserting that France was preparing a revanche to reconquer Alsace-Lorraine.

Whereas Bismarck maintained the Prussian tradition of friendship with Russia, his successors fully involved themselves in the policy of Austria, supporting Austro-Hungarian ambitions in the Balkans. The Pan-Germans added to the annexationist plans of Austria, which in 1908, contrary to her international engagements, had seized Bosnia-Herzegovina, their own plans of German expansion in the Balkans and the Near East. Writers like Albrecht Wirth, Paul Rohrbach and Friedrich Naumann never tired of presenting these areas as Germany's "Lebensraum." All this could not fail to estrange Russia and drive her into the arms of the Western Powers, which on their part had a further reason to be perturbed over the German plans, for they also included the establishment of a vast colonial empire, and this could be done only at the expense of the existing colonial empires. Germany foresaw, however, that she could not achieve such far-reaching aims without war. And she hastened to develop her armaments.

### *Nationalist Propaganda.*

In the years 1911 and 1912, the Reichstag passed in quick succession two draft laws providing for considerable expansion of the German Army. At the same time a vigorous foreign policy was advocated in a considerable section of the press and in numerous publications.<sup>1</sup> All over Germany this huge propaganda campaign was launched with a view to moulding the German people into one vast militarist system. A powerful group of political organizations were operating together, though marching separately.

<sup>1</sup> For instance *Deutschland erwache* (Germany, Awake!), by W. Eisenhart, 1913. *Vernunft-Europa* (Rational Europe), by Rhenanus, 1911.

*Deutschland und England Heeres-oder Flottenverstaerkung?* (Germany and Britain Strengthen the Army or the Navy?) A historic-political lecture by Dr Hermann Oncken, 1912

*West-Marokko deutsch!* (Western Morocco German!), by Heinrich Class, 1911  
Leaflets of Pan-German Federation, No. 29

*Franzoesischer Boykott Deutsche Abwehr* (French Boycott, German Defence), by Arthur Dix, 1913.

*Hundert Jahre deutscher Zukunft* (100 Years of Germany's Future), Berlin, 1913.

*Zur Soziologie und Philosophie des Krieges* (On the Sociology and Philosophy of War), by Othmar Spann, 1913, and many others.

The Wehrverein (Military League) founded in January 1912 by Major-General von Keim, made propaganda in favour of the army and its expansion. The Flottenverein (Navy League) made propaganda among its million members in favour of Admiral von Tirpitz and his naval program. The Kolonialgesellschaft (Colonial League) strove for German expansion in Central Africa, Asia Minor, South America, etc. The Reichsverband zur Bekaempfung der Sozialdemokratie (Reich Association for Combating Social Democracy) aimed at counteracting the moderating influence of international spirit. All these and many other political organizations were linked with the central clearing house of German imperialism, the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German League) which propagated the doctrine that the Germans were a Herrenvolk and thus had a moral right to rule the world.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some examples of this home propaganda, which made Germans fight for four years against the whole world.

At the General meeting of the Wehrverein (see *Deutsche Nachrichten*, May, 20, 1913) held in the Congress Hall at Leipzig, the Chairman, Major-General Keim said to the large audience from all over Germany that :

"Since the first general meeting the Society had increased by 255 firmly established local groups, by 50,000 individual members and 190,000 corporatively adhering members. The strength of the Society lay in truth and in the force of the facts, even if it had already singed many an official beard, notably the beards of the many Philistines who could not be disturbed in their armchair policy at any price. If the Society smelled the approaching odour of gunpowder as early as last autumn, it was entitled to claim credit for it . . ."

Regarding the same General meeting of the Wehrverein the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 20, 1913, reported that another speaker had said :

". . . Every good German man and every good German woman ought to become a member. Germany must pursue a farsighted military policy, as under Bismarck and Caprivi. No matter how much the Wehrverein is abused in the Reichstag, the chief thing is that the Reichstag passes everything. (Laughter). Certainly, an increase of the Army is necessary. But the number alone is not the main thing. The soldiers also have to have a brave heart and a virile spirit, for war is such a terrible thing that drill and discipline alone would not be sufficient to

<sup>1</sup> Bethmann-Hollweg in his Memoirs, *Betrachtungen zum Weltkrieg*, Berlin, 1921, vol. 2, described the pre-1914 transactions of the above organization as "Pan-German improvidence" (alldeutsche Unvorsichtigkeiten)—a priceless phrase.

achieve victory. For this reason the Wehrverein demands that a virile and patriotic spirit should be fostered in the German people. The peace movement is dangerous, and the peace declaration of the 140 Protestant priests is a grave matter. Such moods are also to be found in the teaching profession. This must be energetically combated. A people that ceased to regard virility as its chief aim, is lost. There is no separate popular spirit and military spirit. The spirit of the people is the spirit of the army. If the people is corroded and no longer has any ideals, then the Army also has no ideals. (Stormy applause) "

At the Pan-German Association Congress at Erfurt in 1912 (*cf. Erfurter Allgemeiner Anzeiger*, September 9, 1912) the Chairman of the local group, Baron von Vietinghoff-Scheel, in his speech of welcome recalled the glorious days of 1870. He said :

" Our people has since grown enormously in numbers, as well as in riches, knowledge and ability, but in the recent past its prestige in the eyes of other peoples has again been declining, while at home discontent is rife. The reason for the latter phenomenon is the fact that Germany's boundaries are narrow. We must become land hungry and acquire new territories for settlement, otherwise we shall become a declining people, an atrophied race. We must, with true, sincere love, think of the future of our people and its children, even if we are reproached with a lust for war and fighting. If the Teutonic people were afraid of war, its day would be past. However, the task is to brace our courage, so that if hard times should come we should all stand together in unity and brotherhood."

At the annual meeting of the Hamburg group of the same Association (*cf. Hamburger Nachrichten*, January 19, 1913) General von Liebert spoke on foreign affairs and the will to power in the following terms :

" . . . A growing people wants to expand economically, is compelled to pursue an imperialistic policy, and is driven to pursue a power policy aimed at the expansion of the area of power. A people that has increased as considerably as the German people, must pursue a steady policy of expansion "

At the plenary meeting of the Pan-German Association held in Munich in April 1913,<sup>1</sup> the Chairman, Justice Class, of Mainz, reported on the political situation :

" If to-day we are behind the Government as one man and thank it

<sup>1</sup> See *Taegliche Rundschau*, April 21, 1913. This is what the same paper had written a few weeks earlier (March 14, 1913) : " Above all, the idea that there will be none but economic wars in the future (i.e., wars launched on the basis of false calculations), is erroneous. Just as the Balkans are to-day experiencing a racial struggle, so every German war of the future will be a racial war, a struggle for racial-national power and independence, for space for German or Slav national power and independence, for space for Slav or German settlement. Germany herself, of course, will not launch such a war until the settlement of the country itself has been completed."

for the grandiose Military Bill, we want to make it clear that the German Force must in fact be used if jealous rivals or neighbours should oppose our national requirements . . . Our rapidly growing people must enforce its right to exist, it must see that it obtains new territory, and this old Pan-German idea will be completely recognised by far-seeing politicians both in Britain and France. If an opportunity arises to acquire suitable territory, then it must be precluded in the future that an envious neighbour should bar our path. The German Reich must far-sightedly secure its future, and that is only possible if it adopts a resolutely active policy (Protracted, stormy applause) "

The powerful nationalistic press, like the *Jungdeutschland Post*,<sup>1</sup> *Die Post*,<sup>2</sup> the *Tägliche Rundschau*, *Der Hammer* (anti-semitic), *Der Volkserzieher*, etc., indulged in the same kind of talk. We will not weary the reader with further material of this kind, though it should be noted that there is enough to fill a vast library. It will suffice to recall some apt remarks made in this connection by a German writer, Friedrich Hertz, in his book *Nationalgeist und Politik* :<sup>3</sup>

" . . . The idea that war may serve as a remedy to a people, and also the desire for war, may of course be proved in the works of the publicists of other nations as well. But there it was a matter of rare exceptions that could be explained by special circumstances of a personal or objective character and that were either ignored by public opinion or regarded as eccentricity. On the other hand, the large number of such publications was characteristic of Germany, indicating as it did that there must have

<sup>1</sup> *Jungdeutschland Post* (German Youth Weekly), published by German Youth Federation and German Turnerschaft (Sports Organisation), No. 4, January 23, 1913. "The War," by Otto von Gottberg. "For us, too, the great, glad hour of combat will strike one day . . . Yes, it will be a great, glad hour that we may secretly wish for. The vocal wish for war frequently turns to vain bragging and ridiculous sabre-rattling. But quietly and deep down in the German heart the joy of war and a yearning for it must exist, for we have enough enemies and victory only comes to people that goes to war with song and music, as to a festival . . . Let us, therefore, treat with full-throated laughter the old women of the male sex who fear and wail that it is cruel or ugly. No, war is beautiful. Its sublime greatness raises the human heart high above earthly, everyday things."

<sup>2</sup> *Die Post*, April 7, 1913—"Prussian National Liberal Congress." " . . . What Herr Bassermann said on Saturday evening concerning the need for the Army Bill in particular, and concerning foreign affairs in general, will be welcomed with satisfaction. For the yearning for a grandiose Bismarckian policy, to which Herr Bassermann gave expression, is shared far beyond National Liberal circles and almost by the entire German people, and so is Herr Bassermann's view concerning the unfavourable character of our present international situation and concerning the need for a nationalist-imperialist world policy, towards which developments are irresistibly driving us . . ."

In Bassermann's conviction, wrote the *Berliner Morgenpost* (April 6, 1913) "Britain was only prevented from attacking Germany by the fact that Prince Buelow already had a sufficiently strong Fleet at his disposal. And, as to-day, an attack on our strong Fleet would involve too great a danger even for Britain, it is this strong Fleet that constitutes the strongest guarantee of peace. Our enemy, the Triple Entente, was nothing but an imperialistic land distributing syndicate . . ."

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Hertz, *Nationalgeist und Politik*, Vol. I; *Staatstradition und Nationalismus*, Europa Verlag, Zurich, 1937.

been a corresponding demand, otherwise they would scarcely have found a publisher again and again. The extreme form of these ideas also occurred in Germany alone. There is a great difference whether an author makes the resigned admission on the basis of bitter experience that war is inevitable to prevent decadence, or whether war is held up as the most glorious thing on earth. ”

“*Germany and the Next War*”

General von Bernhardi's most notable book *Germany and the Next War*, appeared in the year 1912. This work already contained apart from the race theory—the entire Nazi ideology, including the combating of pacifism, glorification of war and violence, and the absolute subjection of the conquered nations.

Bernhardi wrote, as did Goebbels in our days :

“ Britain must leave us a completely free hand in European politics, and must from the outset approve any extension of German power on the Continent. She ought no longer to try and prejudice the development of our colonial policy by diplomatic means. She ought to consent to any proposed change in the situation relating to North African possessions in favour of Italy and Germany. She ought to undertake not to place obstacles in the way of Austria's Balkan interests, not to cross German economic endeavours in Asia Minor . . . ”

Concerning France, Bernhardi wrote :

“ In one way or another we must settle with France if we are to have elbow room for our world policy. That is the first and absolutely most important prerequisite of a sound German policy, and since French hostility cannot be eliminated once for all by peaceful means, it must be done by force of arms. France must be so completely overthrown that she should never again be able to cross our path ”

Bernhardi's book had an enormous influence in his country, and was sold in hundreds of thousands. In Britain and in the United States a book of this sort would not have sold more than a small number of copies.

Bernhardi's book was no isolated case. His views were shared by others. Pan-German propaganda had at its disposal a galaxy of intellectuals. The schoolmasters and University professors were willing champions of German nationalism. It is sufficient to mention the names of Driesmans, Lamprecht, von Ranke, Reimer, Hoetzsch, Haller, Marcks, Meinecke, Oncken, Wirth, Schemann, von Sybel, Schaefer and Weber, all men of science of world-wide reputation—to say nothing of the living influence of the famous historian Treitschke.

Let us see, by way of example, what Professor Edmund Weber said in 1913:

"We demand elbow room for the Teutonic race, we demand space to increase our power, space to rule. We feel like a merry passage at arms. After all, we are not so senile as to regard peace and quiet as the most desirable thing on our planet. Oh, no, we look forward to a fight against an opponent who is worthy of us. To wrest world power from the British seems to be an aim worthy of noble men. What are the Germans in the world for if not to accomplish deeds? We have been sitting idle long enough in stuffy air and amid the vapours of putrefaction, forgetting our glorious past. The time must come when the world will have to decide whether it wants to become English or German, whether it wants to obey a nation of 45 millions or a nation of 70 millions. There is no third way."<sup>1</sup>

### *Anti-Semitism*

It is not without interest to recall here that the anti-Semitic movement had become intensified since 1913, when a former Army captain named Mueller von Hausen formed the "*Verband gegen die Ueberhebung des Judentums*." He edited the Association's monthly *Auf Vorposten*, issue after issue of which contained contributions with "revelations" concerning alleged secret machinations of the Jews and Freemasons. One of the first and most important publications of the Association was *Die Judenordnung*, a draft for a basic law designed to brand the Jews from the political, legal, economic and religious point of view as second-class citizens.

After the war, this same Mueller, now under the pseudonym of Gottfried zur Beek, published a translation of the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. At that time a syndicate of noblemen headed by Prince Salm provided the means for an enormous dissemination of this forgery, and it was thus that the *Protocols* started their triumphal world tour. It must have filled Herr Mueller with a sense of pride, when, after the assassination of Walter Rathenau, the Supreme Court in Leipzig described *The Elders of Zion* as "the Bible of Rathenau's murderers" . . . Since then, nine editions of the forgery have been sold to the German public. And so that the element of irony should not be lacking, Herr Mueller threatened Dr Th. Fritsch, editor of an old anti-semitic periodical *Der Hammer*

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Weber, *Krieg oder Frieden mit England?* *Monographien zur Zeitgeschichte*, No. 10, 1913, p. 8.

(published since 1901) as well as Alfred Rosenberg, who later became a well-known Nazi, with legal proceedings for publishing their own translations of the *Protocols*.

*Composition of the Reichstag in 1912*

The Reichstag, though criticised by nationalist circles, whose demands could never be completely satisfied, did not err on the side of excessive political moderation. To gain a better picture of the political physiognomy of the Reichstag, it is necessary to recall the results of the elections of January 12, 1912.

The Reichstag then elected was to become the War Reichstag, which continued until the military collapse of Germany in November 1918. Its composition was as follows :

	Mandates.
Social Democrats ... ..	110
Catholic Centre ... ..	90
Conservatives (later, in 1919, German National People Party) ... ..	45
National Liberals (later Volksartei-People's Party) ...	44
Progressive People's Party (Fortschrittliche Volkspartei, later in 1919—Democrats) ... ..	41
Reich Party (strong Pangerman tint, later during the War became the German Fraction) ... ..	13
Economic Alliance and German Reform Party (both Antisemitic) ... ..	11
Poles ... ..	18
Alsace-Lorrainers .. ..	9
Hannoverians ... ..	5
Others (Independents, one Dane, etc) ... ..	11
Total ...	<u>397</u>

The Social Democrats had gained, as compared with the previous election (January 25, 1907), no fewer than sixty-seven seats. The other parties sustained losses, the heaviest being those of the Conservatives (15) and the Catholic Centre (14).

*The Military Bill of 1913*

In January 1913, a bill was introduced by the Government providing for the expansion of the Army by a further 136,000 men (including officers and non-commissioned officers). The military expenditure of the German Reich



for 1913 was to amount to 1,472,000,000 marks, out of a total Budget of 3,000 millions. To meet this burden it was proposed to make a single extraordinary Defence Levy on capital, estimated to produce 1,000 millions marks. (This Levy was later covered in one day.)

In the Reichstag on April 1913, in his speech introducing the Military Bill, Reich Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg stated that Germany's relations with Britain, France and Russia were entirely friendly and normal, but pointed to the growing armaments of those countries. We quote the following sentences from the Chancellor's speech :

"Political friendships are political business transactions and in political, as in economic life, business transactions are most easily and reliably concluded between strong parties. The weakling always goes to the wall. A people that lacks a genuine sacrificial spirit or believes that it is not rich enough to keep its armaments in order thereby only betrays that it is played out. I beg you to bear one idea in mind through every difficulty. If anyone should threaten our homestead, we must be ready to the last man."

It was thus that the Reich forged its Big Lie, which it used in preparation for the hour of aggression. In 1913, the Chancellor said: "If anyone should threaten our homestead . . ." In 1914 he needed only to say to the Germans: "We have been threatened . . ." and the Germans believed. . . .

When the Bill was put to the vote in the Reichstag (397 Mandates) on June 30, 1913, it was passed by a large majority against the votes of the Social Democrats (110), the deputies representing German-annexed Poland, and those representing German-annexed Alsace-Lorraine.

The National Liberal Reichstag Deputy Bassermann, who had a close collaborator and friend in Stresemann, said on the same day at the Fourth Party Congress in Hanover: "What is the explanation of the fact that new and ever greater military programs have been carried out year by year? We in these days think wishfully of the Bismarckian policy under which Germany was recognised in the world, and under which Bismarck was the 'arbiter mundi' and the leading statesman of all Europe . . . If to-day international politics is suffering from the excessive French national sentiment, and if even to-day the lust for revenge manifests itself in France, the cause must be sought in the fact that France has a strong prop

in Russia. The tremendous advance of Germany in the economic sense was bound to lead to further sharp antagonisms, until finally the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente were confronting each other in Europe."

*The Socialists Vote for the War Credits*

The same day the other Bills, those relating to the Defence Levy and other property taxes, were also put to the vote. Here the picture was different, in so far as the Social Democrats had decided to vote for these Bills. In the course of the second debate, on June 25, Deputy Dr David, explaining the attitude of his Party, said :

"No matter what attitude we adopt to this law, in whole or in part, our fundamental rejection of further rearmament remains unshaken. We utterly condemn it that enormous new amounts should be withdrawn from the national economic organism for unproductive purposes, allegedly in order to make the Fatherland secure, but actually in order to increase insecurity, worsen our relations with other countries and notably—and this is deplorable—render our relations with the great civilized French nation more critical.

"However, the attitude of the great majority of this House to the Defence Bill has shown us that they are firmly determined to approve this monstrous armaments increase . . . We have no means of preventing them from doing so. All that is left to us is at least to try and ensure that the financial bills shall be passed in such a form that the economically weak strata should be spared and the burden should be placed as far as possible on the shoulders of the economically strong and strongest. This Defence Levy represents a general, direct Reich income and property tax for the next three years. With this Defence Levy you have for the next three years met the Social Democratic demand for a Reich income and property tax."

Thus when the vote on the Financial Bills was taken, by name, all the Social Democrats, without exception, voted for them.

Though the German Socialists frequently criticised the Reich's foreign policy, their vote in 1913 indicated that they might change their minds and give support to the Government in case of an international crisis.

The policy of the Social Democratic Party was of capital importance as regards the stability of the German home front. Since the 1912 election the Socialists had commanded 4,250,000 votes and held—as we have seen—110 out of a total of 397 seats in the Reichstag. Between 1907 and 1912 the number of votes polled by them had risen by nearly

a million, and this made them into a stronger party than the combined Conservative groups. With its thirty-six daily newspapers and its thousands of different organizations, in addition to the support of three-quarters of the trade unionists, the Socialist Party was bound to exert considerable influence on German public opinion.

Before 1914 the Socialists occupied in the Reichstag the same position as later, under the Weimar Republic, when their parliamentary fraction always held approximately one-quarter of the total seats. Evidently, in 1914, it was bound to weigh heavily with the Imperial Government, as well as with the General Staff, whether their attitude was favourable or hostile to the war. Consequently, foreign opinion was anxiously asking itself what policy the Socialists were going to pursue. The answer was not easy to foresee, because of their vacillating conduct before 1914. This question did not arise in connection with other Parties, who were from the outset expected to support the war policy. This was in fact the case with the Conservatives and National Liberals, as well as with the Catholic Centre and Progressives.

#### *Socialist Vacillation during the Period 1870-1914*

The same question had been posed at the time of the war of 1870. At that time there was disagreement between the Socialists of the Parliament of Northern Germany. Wilhelm Liebknecht, father of Karl,<sup>1</sup> was in favour of a vote against war credits. Karl Kautsky in 1914<sup>2</sup> recalled that while it was true that in 1870, Wilhelm Liebknecht was in favour of rejecting the war credits, August Bebel, his colleague in the North German Parliament, opposed him on that question: "Bebel was in favour of abstention from voting on the credits and succeeded in convincing Liebknecht of the propriety of that course of action . . . While Bebel and Liebknecht abstained from voting, the Socialists of the Lassalle movement<sup>3</sup> in the Reichstag voted for the war credits."

The attitude of Liebknecht and Bebel was condemned

<sup>1</sup> In 1914, Wilhelm Liebknecht's son alone had the courage to maintain his father's tradition.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Neue Zeit*, November 27, 1914. For this Section, see W. E. Walling, "The Socialists and the War," New York, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> Headed by von Schweitzer.

by the Executive of the Socialist Party, which charged them with having committed a grave tactical error. Bebel, discouraged, wrote a letter, dated August 13, 1870: "If the Executive takes action against Liebknecht<sup>1</sup> we shall refuse collaboration on the 'Volksstaat' . . . You all seem to have fallen victim to a kind of nationalist paroxysm; you seem to desire a scandal and disruption in the Party at any price," while W. Liebknecht in a letter to Bracke, a member of the Executive, declared that he felt inclined "to emigrate to America out of disgust with these patriotic junketings."

Let us go on to 1907. The Congress of the International was then assembled in Stuttgart. Jean Jaurès, on behalf of the majority of the French Socialists, submitted to the Congress a draft resolution demanding a general strike, or insurrection, every time a war should break out in Europe. It was thus that he proposed to make it impossible for governments to wage war. There was strong opposition. It came from the German Socialists, whose spokesman, August Bebel, said:

"... What we are fighting against is not the Fatherland itself, which belongs to the proletariat far more than to the ruling classes, but the conditions prevailing in the Fatherland in the interests of the ruling classes . . . I must declare firmly that with us these means are impossible and beyond discussion . . . Nobody among Germany's ruling classes wants war—he continued—partly owing to the existence of the Socialist movement. Prince von Buelow<sup>2</sup> admitted to me that the governments knew what great dangers to government and society a European war would involve, and that they would therefore avoid it if at all possible . . . If even we Social Democrats cannot get along entirely without change in the relations between the various countries, this is merely for defence and upon democratic principles, which forbid the misuse of military power."

Nevertheless, at the Stuttgart Congress, as later, in 1910, at the Copenhagen Congress, the German Socialists supported the thesis that the Socialists should oppose military credits.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Editor of the party organ *Der Volksstaat*.

<sup>2</sup> Then Reich's Chancellor.

<sup>3</sup> The Stuttgart Congress (1907) passed the following Resolution: "The Congress regards it as a duty to impress upon the working classes and especially on their representatives in all Parliaments, the absolute necessity of opposing all naval and military armaments and of refusing funds for their upkeep. They must remember the nature of modern society: that these armaments only help to maintain the antagonism between the nations. The proletariat must make it their business also to educate the children of the working classes in the spirit of

We now come back to 1913, and shall see why the German Socialists did not translate this principle into practice. H. Wendel, Socialist Deputy of the Reichstag, states<sup>1</sup> that German Socialism had done its best to oppose the augmentation of effectives by 136,000 men, but that "the struggle of the Social Democratic Party inside, as well as outside Parliament, failed to prevent the passage of the Military Bill, for the Socialist Party stood entirely alone, hence in the minority. . . . All bourgeois Parties, from Right to Left, have now surrendered body and soul to imperialist world politics, and are therefore saturated to the bone with the militarist spirit."

The German Socialists, having voted against the Bill augmenting the effectives of the Army, proceeded, as we have seen, to vote in favour of the credits required for the purpose. They justified their attitude by saying that thanks to their participation in the affirmative vote, the credits were covered by direct taxation and not by taxing consumption. Wendell in this connection adds:

"The Social Democratic representatives, after mature reflection, also voted in favour of the special military estimates, although they would have been passed even if they had voted against it. This affirmative vote arose from the fact that the special military estimates represented the first step towards a system of taxation corresponding in principle to the demands of Social Democracy."

In a word, contrary to their solemn promises at the International Congresses, the German Socialists, under the cloak of a fiscal reform suggested by the Government, accepted responsibility for the increasing militarisation of the Reich. The Socialists were, however, fully aware of the political danger involved in the increase of German armaments. Actually, their group in the Reichstag expressed its view on the Military Bill in the following terms:

"... Foreign political conditions do not warrant the expenditure. Our relations with England are good. The Balkan States, far from being dangerous to us, will soon fall into dissension and strife with each other.

international brotherhood and Socialism, and to strengthen their class consciousness."

The Copenhagen Congress (1910) "The Congress, reiterating the oft-repeated duty of Socialist representations in the Parliaments to combat militarism with all the means at their command and to refuse the means for armaments, require from its representatives . . . etc."

<sup>1</sup> *The New Order*, American Periodical, September, 1913.

The Chancellor's reference to the threatening Slav peril is but a theoretical fantasy. The French Chauvinist is not one iota worse than our own German 'patriot'.

"The people on either side of the frontier demand peace. The joint manifesto drawn up by the French and German Socialists on the 15th March proves that this is so. Russia is busy with her own internal troubles and with the maintenance of her power in the Far East.

"All these reasons are but a cloak for the real reason. You want elbow room to carry out your imperialistic policies. . . Armaments must be increased to the extreme limit, so that we may add weight to our demands when the time comes to divide the Turkish spoils among the great European nations. Not the protection of our own frontiers is the aim, but the intimidation of other nations—those nations which, like our own imperialists, are aiming at war and conquest."

### *Majority and Minority at 1913 Party Congress*

At the same time, the Party contained a minority opposed to this opportunist and contradictory policy that tried to reconcile criticism of the Reich's foreign policy with the sanctioning of military expenditure. This minority expounded its views at the Party Congress held in the autumn of 1913, but lost the battle.

One of the majority representatives at the Party Congress, Philip Scheidemann, Deputy Speaker of the Reichstag, asserted that Socialist refusal to approve the military taxes would have led to the dissolution of the Reichstag, which in turn would have led to an electoral defeat of the Left, as they would have been unable to make the opposition to the Military Bill popular among the electors.

This point of view was strongly criticised by the minority representatives. Here are some of their arguments: From the speech of Curt Geyer:

"... Whichever way you look at it, you must admit that the Tax Bill was passed this session for the express purpose of raising funds for military expenditure. You cannot get away from that. It all boils down to this. Has the parliamentary group the right to vote for military taxes? Once we grant the Government funds for military expenditure our whole struggle against militarism becomes a farce.

"I agree with your argument that the Party must use its power, when it becomes a political factor, mainly to relieve the working class of some of its burdens. But we must not increase the power of the ruling class, and that is what we do when we provide it with the means for more military expenditure. We wish to save the Party from the reproach that we are not in earnest in our struggle against militarism. It is being asked on all sides, what is the use of all our anti-war agitation, if we

provide the means to make war. No high-sounding words, nor even your vote against the Military Bill as such, will alter the fact that you have strengthened it by voting the means to carry it into effect. Indeed, some people have gone so far as to say that our whole anti-militarist agitation will dissolve into thin air if we grant the means to support militarism. You argue that the Government proposal for direct taxation is a great victory for the Party. Do not overestimate the strength of the Party. Our vaunted greatness was not sufficient to prevent the submission of this outrageous Military Bill to the Reichstag with its 110 Socialist members."

From the speech of Stadthagen :

"... Whenever our struggle against militarism clashes with our struggle for direct taxation, the former must be the decisive factor. We must oppose everything that will promote militarism, whether it be direct or indirect taxation. Our attitude towards taxation must be governed by this principle

"... If the taxation Bill had not received the number of votes required for its passage, the Reichstag would have been dissolved. This should have been our aim. But some comrades were afraid of an electoral campaign because they believe that we should be defeated by the patriotic arguments of the other parties. To wish to avoid a campaign for such reasons shows an extraordinary lack of faith in our principles and demands."

And Ledebour :

"... If we had been strong enough to defeat the Military Bill, together with the taxation Bill, and could thereby have enforced the dissolution of the Reichstag, we should have had entirely different prospects. We could have taken up the struggle against militarism in its whole significance and could have carried it on with uncompromising vigour ..."

In the end, the minority was defeated by the Party Congress, and its amendment was rejected. The amendment stated :

"... militarism is the most powerful weapon in the hands of the ruling class and should be relentlessly attacked. Therefore our representatives must vote 'Nay' on all Bills submitted to the Reichstag with a view to strengthening militarism, including provisions to levy taxes, direct or indirect, to cover the cost of militarism."

After the defeat of this amendment the Social Democrats in the Reichstag remained free to continue their 1913 policy and support military expenditure.

### *The Crisis*

On July 5, 1914, after the Sarajevo murder, the Berlin Government informed Vienna that it was resolved to support Austria if she decided to act. The final consultation

took place at Potsdam, and it was decided that: "Vienna will send to Belgrade a very emphatic ultimatum with a very short time limit."<sup>1</sup> The ultimatum to Serbia, which was drafted in such a manner as to make it unacceptable to that country, was sent to the Belgrade Government by an Austria resolved to force her way into the Balkans.

While, in face of this imminent danger of war, Sir Edward Grey, on July 24, proposed to Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg that he should endeavour to appease Austria,<sup>2</sup> Serbia declared that she was prepared to accept nearly all the conditions of the humiliating ultimatum. However, this was not enough for Austria, and her Minister in Belgrade demanded his passport. Sir Edward Grey was still hopeful—as was the case with Sir Neville Henderson in Berlin twenty-five years later—and suggested a Conference of Ambassadors in London to settle the conflict. But Germany refused to participate, arguing that this was a matter between Austria and Serbia and not an international business. Germany's bad faith was altogether evident.<sup>3</sup>

On July 25, Count Szögyeny, Austro-Hungarian Am-

<sup>1</sup> Prince Lichnowsky's *Memoirs and Report of the Bavarian Minister* von Lerchenfeld, July 18, 1914. A. Luckau, *The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 273. *Endowment for International Peace*, New York, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> But the Chancellor, pretending that he had not received the British telegram in time, only replied to Sir Edward Grey when the object of the ultimatum had already been attained.

<sup>3</sup> The Kaiser has often been represented as being hostile to any European conflagration. Repeated reference has been made to the letter he wrote in 1908 to Lord Tweedmouth, in which he emphatically denied that the German Navy Bill was in any way directed against Britain, etc. (*cf. Morning Post*, October 20, 1914.) But the only important point in this connection was that on the eve of the war the Kaiser was in favour of the Austrian action against Serbia. He wrote, and initialed, marginal notes on several reports on the political situation received from von Tschirschky, the German Ambassador in Vienna: "I hear the wish expressed from reliable people here that the Serbians should be seriously taken in hand (Now or never—W.) One should draw up a number of demands on the Serbians, and should they not accept them, go for them heavily. I will take every opportunity to issue a calm but explicit and solemn warning against precipitate action." (Who authorized him to do that? That's very stupid. It's got nothing to do with him, it is up to Austria to do what she likes in the matter. Afterwards, if things go wrong, people will say: Germany refused. Tschirschky must be asked not to write nonsense like this. The Serbians must be cleared out and quickly—W.) And concerning the Austrian Note to Serbia, to which the German Minister in Belgrade referred in a telegram, dated July 24, 1914: "The firm tone and precise demands of the Austrian Note have come as a very great surprise to the Serbian Government." (Bravo! One couldn't have expected more from Vienna—W.) Elsewhere, on the margin of a passage relating to England, the Kaiser wrote: "I will never conclude a Naval Agreement with such scoundrels." *Cf. Ph. Scheidemann, Memoirs of a Social-Democrat*, vol. I, pp. 319-320.



bassador in Berlin sent a strictly confidential telegram to his Government in which he said: "... here it is generally taken for granted that in case of refusal on the part of Serbia, our immediate declaration of war will coincide with military operations. Delay in beginning military operations is here considered as a great danger because of the intervention of other Powers. We are urgently advised to proceed at once and to confront the world with a *fait accompli*." On the same day Germany called up her reservists, and the units stationed in the Western and Eastern parts of the Reich respectively moved nearer to the frontiers.

On July 26, Germany, while recalling her Fleet from Norway and completing an ultimatum to Belgium, tried to secure British neutrality through the intermediary of the Kaiser's younger brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, who was on a visit to King George V at Windsor. Tsar Nicolas II of Russia, on July 29, decided to order mobilisation as from the following day. But in view of pressing German *démarches*, which were sometimes menacing and sometimes amicable, he agreed to make it only partial (*i.e.*, thirteen Army Corps). Obviously, the Reich wanted to gain time by making others lose time. Germany herself on the 31st declared a state of emergency, while Austria-Hungary was mobilising. A German ultimatum was despatched to Russia on August 1, while the German Ambassador in Paris, von Schoen, called upon France to remain neutral and to cede to Germany the fortresses of Toul and Verdun by way of guarantee.

On the afternoon of August 1, France decided to mobilise. Though Germany had already partially mobilised as from July 21, she ordered general mobilisation on August 1, and on August 3 declared war on France, alleging attacks by French aircraft,<sup>1</sup> German patrols having already earlier penetrated at several points into French territory. In reply to a twelve hours' ultimatum, Belgium refused to allow passage to German troops through her territory.

That was how Germany unleashed the first world-war that was to cost millions of lives.

<sup>1</sup> In a Note, dated May 28, 1919, on the responsibility of the War, addressed to the President of the Peace Conference, Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau admitted that "these allegations were carelessly adopted without any examination of their accuracy."

On the point of German war-guilt we find an authoritative witness in the person of ex-Reich Chancellor Prince von Bulow himself. In a letter to Theodor Wolff,<sup>1</sup> he gave, in a number of points, "his views on the most important events of the outbreak of war in 1914, stating what he would have done as a responsible statesman. Here are the most essential of these points :

"1 I would not have given Austria a blank cheque as regards her conduct toward Serbia, but would on the contrary have demanded the right to look at the ultimatum in time. In any case, when the ultimatum, twenty-four hours before it was handed over, was lying on the table of the Foreign Office, I would have stopped the whole action with the greatest emphasis and the utmost vigour

"2. I would never, and in any circumstances, have permitted Austria to declare the Serbian reply, after a hasty examination, as inadequate, to sever diplomatic relations with Serbia, and to start military operations. Serbia had agreed to nearly all the Austrian demands. We ought to have recognised this with gratitude for the wise peace endeavours of all the Powers and the goodwill of the Serbs, proposing at the same time that the two (very doubtful) Austrian demands not yet accepted by the Serbs should be submitted for examination and decision to the Hague Tribunal.

"3. I would not have declared war on Russia and France on our part, for we thereby placed *ex nexu foederis* first Rumania, then Italy. That was very stupid on the part of Bethmann and Jagow. Even our friends in Italy, who excuse us by saying that in the summer of 1914 we sinned not from malice, but from simplicity, cannot explain this *lourde bêtise*. It is indeed difficult to explain, and always will be. Ballin has assured me that the reason Bethmann insisted that we should declare war on Russia was that he thought that the Social Democrats could only be brought into it that way, expecting that "Tsarism" (detested by the whole of our Left-Wing) would affect them as a red rag affects a certain quadruped

"4 I would, of course, never have permitted our march into Belgium, so long as Belgian neutrality had not been infringed by our adversaries . . ."

This view at the same time constitutes an admission of a policy of aggression, though Bulow euphemistically described it merely as "stupidity" on the part of Bethmann-Hollweg.

### *Socialists Establish German War-Guilt—July 1914*

At the time of the tense crisis that preceded the outbreak of the last war, *i.e.*, after the Sarajevo murder and the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 29, 1929, No. 510—"What Prince Bulow would have done in the Summer of 1914" Also *Berliner Monatshefte*, 1929, VII, p. 1054—Article by Prof. Paul Herre

Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, the German Socialists indicated quite clearly the responsibility of the German ruling classes. At the meeting of the International Socialist Executive held in Brussels in the last days of July, Reichstag Deputy Haase declared that :

"The Austrian ultimatum to Serbia is in reality a provocation to war, which had been desired as well as expected. Serbia's reply is so moderate that if there had been any good faith on the part of Austria peace could have been assured. But Austria-Hungary wants war."

He continued :

"Austria-Hungary is apparently relying on Germany. But the German Socialists declare that the proletariat is not pledged by secret treaties. The German proletariat contends that Germany ought not to intervene even if Russia did so."

The Socialists were quite aware who had provoked the crisis, and actually condemned the war agitation of both the Austrian and German Governments. In this connection some relevant extracts are available. Proclamation of the German Socialist Party (July 25, 1914) :

"... once more the fury of war, unleashed by Austrian imperialism, is setting out to bring death and destruction over the whole of Europe. While we condemn the conduct of the Greater Serbian Nationalists, the frivolous war provocation of the Austro-Hungarian Government calls for the sharpest protest. For the demands of that Government are more brutal than any that have ever been made to an independent State in the history of the world, and can only be designed to provoke war. In the name of humanity and civilisation, the class-conscious proletariat of Germany makes a fiery protest against the criminal conduct of the warmongers. It urgently demands that the German Government should use its influence with the Austrian Government for the preservation of peace and, if this shameful war cannot be prevented, to refrain from armed intervention. Not a drop of a German soldier's blood shall be sacrificed to the lust of power of Austria's rulers and to the imperialistic profit seekers."

The Socialist Organ *Vorwärts* (July 25, 1914) wrote :

"... They want war, they, the unscrupulous elements that influence and control the Vienna Court. They want war—the wild clamour of the sensational Press has been inciting to war for weeks. They want war—the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia makes it clear to all the world. . . .

"... It was an act of criminal frivolity on the part of the German Press to spur its dear allies and comrades to go to the last extremes in their war lust. But Berlin is playing just as dangerous a game as Vienna."

The following day *Vorwärts* wrote :

"... The German Government, through the official Press Bureau, denies that it had been consulted as to the terms of the Austrian ultimatum.

... If the German Government had no knowledge of the final draft of the ultimatum, 'the pretext for war,' as the *Rheinisch-Westfaellische Zeitung* calls it, it must have received a general outline of the Austrian Government's intentions. The fact that the German Government thereupon failed to take steps against the Austrian intentions, which involved nothing less than the prelude to a premeditated declaration of war, constitutes a terrible indictment against it."

On July 29, *Vorwärts* went on:

"... England and Russia have proposed the temporary cessation of hostilities on the part of Austria. Austria has declined because she desires first to speak in the language of force. Germany is said to have declined to support this first important step towards a settlement of the question of a world war. We can scarcely believe that the German Government has taken this attitude because, as we have shown above, it thereby assumes a most awful responsibility—before its own people, as well as before the rest of the world and the forum of history. It is already said in France, where the desire to maintain peace is as ardent as anywhere else in the world, that henceforth no one can hold Russia responsible, that Austria and her ally, Germany, alone will be regarded as the incendiaries who have started this world conflagration, that they alone are the trouble makers.

"And in England, too, it is the general impression that the German Kaiser is to blame, that, as the ally and adviser of Austria, it lay in his power to shake war or peace out of the folds of his toga. And England is right. In the present situation William II holds the issue in his hands."<sup>1</sup>

Reading these statements and articles of the German Socialist Party, foreign opinion was entitled to hope that peace might be saved at the last moment by categorical Socialist opposition to Germany's entry into the war. This hope was shared by many foreign statesmen, and might easily have changed to conviction, for the German Socialists had formally promised the French Socialists to adopt a hostile attitude towards war credits. On July 31, 1914, when Austria-Hungary and Russia had already ordered their mobilisation and Germany had sent Russia

<sup>1</sup> To quote one of Scheidemann's formulas: German Social Democracy has always adopted "a hostile attitude to German militarism in general and to the German Imperialism under the Kaiser in particular, but has never been opposed to the doctrine of self-defence." If we concede this, we must ask ourselves whether the war of 1914 was a war of self-defence for Germany—yes or no? Judging by all the German Socialist declarations prior to the German aggression on Belgium, it can certainly not be termed as such. Scheidemann went so far as to write in his *Memoirs* (Vol. I, pp. 318-19) that "we could print the contents of whole libraries—a beginning has already been made with the publications of the *Auswärtiges Amt*—to prove our innocence or our comparatively insignificant degree of guilt." And he added that to say that Germany was alone responsible for the war was a "scandalous statement" and "an infamous libel on a peace-loving people to throw this accusation to their teeth."

an ultimatum with a twelve-hour limit, the Executive of the German Social Democratic Party and Socialist representatives of the Reichstag decided to send Hermann Mueller, the future Chancellor of the German Republic, to Paris to discuss joint action with the leaders of the French Socialist Party. Hermann Mueller's arrival in Paris coincided with the assassination of Jaurés. The next day after Jaurés' death, Mueller informed his French colleagues "that German Socialists would probably vote against the credits; they might perhaps abstain, but in no circumstances would they vote in favour."<sup>1</sup>

However, the Prussian War Minister did not take very seriously either the promises or the criticisms of the Socialists. On July 31, he informed the various Commands that "according to reliable information the Social Democratic Party are determined to behave as every German should under the prevailing circumstances. I consider it my duty to notify you of this fact, so that military commanders should take it into account in introducing their measures."

The following day events justified not the foreigners, but the Prussian War Minister !

<sup>1</sup> See Ph. Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social-Democrat*, Vol. I, p. 194. This scene is reminiscent of another one which occurred in Paris two years earlier. The French elections of 1912, just as in Germany, were a real success for the Socialists. Shortly afterwards they asked their German colleagues to send a representative who would take part in their victory celebrations and discuss with them common action for safeguarding peace. On March 30, 1912, Scheidemann left for Paris. The French were quite touched by the note of sincerity they found in their comrade from beyond the Rhine. Scheidemann records that after his speech Jaurés embraced him "and literally danced me round the stage, overjoyed, as he said, at my having struck a note he had long wanted to hear and whose sound he had scarcely dared to expect." Tens of thousands of Paris workers demonstrated on that day in favour of Peace—it was a demonstration of their faith in German democracy.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST THREE YEARS OF THE WAR

#### *Socialists Change their Minds and Rally to National Front*

WHEN, on August 1, the German Government proclaimed general mobilisation, commencing hostilities against Russia and France, all controversy on the Reich's attitude in the international crisis ceased. The whole of Germany stood united behind its Kaiser and its political and military leaders. Even the Socialists had forgotten their proclamation of July 25, and the impassioned articles in *Vorwärts* which had so clearly established the guilt of the Vienna and Berlin Governments. All their doubts had vanished and, with a suddenly silenced conscience, they ranged themselves with the bourgeois parties to help the Kaiser in the realization of Germany's "historic" task. The Socialist attitude was not merely that of "my country, right or wrong," for that phrase implies a certain resignation. The overflowing enthusiasm they displayed at the sight of German soldiers smashing the frontier posts of neutral Belgium was more in keeping with the initial phrase of the German National Anthem—"Germany above all!"

However, the Socialists could not execute this *volte-face* without explaining it to their electors, whose heads, only a few days before, had been stuffed with invective against Austria-Hungary and even against their own Government. The reactionary régime of Tsarist Russia presented an easy pretext. The German Socialists now said that they had rallied to the sacred cause of the Fatherland, not in order, as the Kaiser put it, to wage an invigorating and joyous war, but in order to wage a holy war against the despotic Russian régime. In giving this explanation they probably forgot the adage that charity begins at home.

But when the secret hopes shared by all Germans failed to materialize, and Great Britain refused to consent to the violation of Belgian neutrality, German hatred, as intense as the disappointed hopes were great, turned against Great

Britain. Perfidious Albion became the principal enemy, the fomentor of trouble on the Continent, the modern Carthage.<sup>1</sup> "Gott strafe England!" was the new slogan. The German Socialists, carried away by the mighty wave of feeling against Britain, added their own invective to that of the other political parties. This time, in contrast with their Russian argument, they could not advance the excuse of wanting to spread democracy, for the country that had created parliamentary democracy could not be charged with reaction. But the hatred against Britain would have been too difficult to repress, and the Socialists were as vocal as the rest in abusing the Power that had dared to defy the Fatherland.<sup>2</sup>

A great many Socialists, as Scheidemann, Richard Fischer, Suedekum, Vollmar, David, Kolb, Heine, Hirsch, Noske, Leinert, Legien, Hue, Robert Schmidt (the last-named four representing the trade unions) and others, made statements referring to the war as the "British" war. Friedrich Stampfer published an article in which he said :

"When the fateful hour strikes, the workers will stand by the promise given on behalf of their representatives, the men 'without a Fatherland' will do their duty and will not let themselves be outdone by the patriots."

Among the infinitesimally small minority of dissidents who openly opposed the war policy, the same names recur always and everywhere: Liebknecht, Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg,<sup>3</sup> and a very few other individual pacifists.

The Socialists who had thus, overnight so to say, departed from their official dogmas, were most careful—to the intense gratification of military circles—not to mention the Reich's annexationist projects, and confined themselves in their foreign propaganda to the imperialism of those with whom the Reich was at war.

In his 1915 New Year Message to his constituents, in the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arthur Rosenberg, *The Birth of the German Republic*, p. 99: "The great masses of the German people looked upon England as their principal enemy throughout the war."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. review of the Press in *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, articles by Hugo Pretzsche and W. Oehme. On this, the Government organ *Taegliche Rundschau* proudly wrote: "No Pan-German or imperialist nationalist would speak otherwise on the meaning and goal of this war."

<sup>3</sup> As early as February, 1914, the Prussian War Ministry prosecuted Rosa Luxemburg for her anti-militarist propaganda. She was convicted on February 25 and was released from prison only in November, 1918.

advertisement columns of the *Bergische Arbeiterstimme*, Scheidemann wrote :

" . . . We will not only live through those terrible times with our wits about us and our eyes open ; we will also bring to shame the plans of our enemies . we will win ! . . . Hold on ! On you depends the fate of our country and the German worker May the New Year bring speedy victory and lasting peace ! "

A few weeks later, on February 4, 1915, he said to his Reichstag group :

" I do not believe in a stalemate, in an indefinite outcome of this world war. If it came to that, then we would get peace for only two or three years."

### *Necessity Knows no Law*

On August 4, Imperial troops under General von Emmich attacked Liège, in Belgium, and invaded Luxemburg. Thus the neutrality of two countries whose status had been recognised and guaranteed by Germany in international treaties, was openly and without any justification violated by the Reich. The same day von Bethmann-Hollweg, the Imperial Chancellor, declared :

" We are now on the defensive Necessity knows no law. Our troops have entered Luxemburg, and perhaps have already entered Belgian territory. That is a contravention of the rules of international law. It is true that the French Government has informed Brussels that it would respect Belgian neutrality so long as it would be respected by its opponents. But we knew that France was ready for an attack France could wait, but we could not. A French attack on our flank on the Lower Rhine might have produced fatal results So we were compelled to proceed . . .

" We shall try to make good the wrong we have thus committed as soon as we shall have reached our military goal. Those who, like ourselves, are fighting for the highest aims, can only think of one thing—that they must smash their way through "

Not a single member of the Reichstag rose to protest against the Chancellor's brutal statement—none had a word to say in defence of the rights of neutrals and small countries. The entire Reichstag was solidly behind the Imperial Government. The day the German troops were flung against France through Belgium, the complete unity of the whole of Germany was already an accomplished fact. An all-Party truce (" Burgfrieden ") had been concluded, extending from the Conservative and National Liberal Parties—representatives of the officers, high officials, big landowners, bankers and industrialists—to the Socialist



Party, the mouthpiece of the working class, with the conservatively tinted Catholic Centre and the moderately Leftish Progressive Party in the middle.

In these circumstances the Kaiser was justified in declaring on August 4 to a Berlin crowd from the balcony of the Imperial Palace: "In the impending struggle I know of no parties among my people. We are only Germans."

And in his speech from the Throne, the Kaiser said:

"Gentlemen, you have read what I said to my people from the balcony of the Palace I repeat I know of no parties any longer I know only of Germans (stormy applause), and in witness of the fact that you are firmly determined to stand by me through thick and thin, through danger and death, without any distinction of party, status, or religion, I call upon the leaders of the parties to come forward and make a solemn promise to me"

In response to this, all the party leaders stretched out their hands. The report of the incident states that the Emperor shook each of them vigorously by the hand.

#### *Socialists Vote for War Loans with other Parties*

The same day the Reichstag jubilantly voted war credits amounting to 5 billion marks. The Socialist group had decided to vote for these credits by 98 votes against 14,<sup>1</sup> but at the plenary sitting of the Reichstag the 110 Deputies at its command voted unanimously, in order to conform to party discipline.

In contrast with the famous precedent established by Bebel and Liebknecht in 1870, the German Socialists on August 4 acted against their own principles, lacking the courage to oppose the overwhelming nationalistic excitation. Here are some extracts from the Party statement read by Haase in the Reichstag:

"We are facing a critical time The results of Imperialistic policy, by creating a prolonged period of competitive armaments and intensifying national differences, have spread like a tidal wave over Europe. The responsibility for this falls on the supporters of this policy we refuse to take it. Social Democracy has opposed with all its might this ominous development and has up to the very last moment worked for the preservation of peace by demonstrations on a huge scale in all countries, acting in complete harmony especially with our French brethren Our efforts have been in vain.

<sup>1</sup> The "Nays" included Karl Liebknecht and Haase, Chairman of the group; the latter declared that he would abide by the decision of the overwhelming majority.

“ Our fervent wishes accompany our brothers who have been summoned to arms, regardless of their political opinions. (Applause from all parts of the House.)

“ But as far as our people and its independence is concerned, much, if not all, is at stake in case of a triumph of the Russian despotism, which is already weltering in the blood of Russia's own noblest sons.

“ . . It devolves upon us, therefore, to avert this danger, to defend the Kultur and independence of our own land. We stand by what we have always maintained : We will not desert the Fatherland in the hour of peril. Here we are in complete agreement with the International, which has at all times recognised the right of every nation to national independence and self-determination. And we, in complete agreement with the International, condemn all wars of aggression. We demand that directly our security is won and our enemies are inclined to make peace, the war should end in a peace that will make friendly relations with our neighbours possible. We demand this not only in the interests of international solidarity, which we have always fought for, but also in the interests of the German people .

“ . And now, bearing these principles in mind, we approve the granting of the necessary credits ” (Applause from all parties )

Various arguments were put forward afterwards to justify the Socialists' unequivocal support of the war effort, but the most significant was probably that of the trade unionist, Wilhelm Janson. In his book, *Arbeiterinteressen und Kriegsergebnis* (The Interests of Labour and the Outcome of the War), Janson explained the solidarity between German capital and labour thus :

“ In case of a military defeat, the German workers will have to suffer far worse than the German capitalists, for the latter will be in a position to emigrate, with their fortunes, to foreign countries offering more favourable possibilities of investment . . . The ruin of German industry would at the same time entail the ruin of the working class, and all hopeful trade union activity would be at an end .

“ Our trade union successes are based on the fact that Germany's industry has become a world-market industry.”

Even the few dissident Socialists who subsequently were to detach themselves from their party and form the nucleus of the Independent Party, did not dare to vote against the war credits. It would seem, however, that if on August 4 they had considered support of the war policy as being incompatible with their dogmas, they would have been bound to refuse to conform to party discipline ;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In her well-known pamphlet, written in a Berlin prison in April, 1915, Rosa Luxemburg stated “ . . A burden of guilt lies on the Social Democratic group in the Reichstag. For in the hour of greatest need they deserted their country. The chief duty to the country at that time was to demonstrate the true background of this imperialist war . . . ”

later, when they became convinced that the Bethmann-Hollweg Government's war aims would include a series of important conquests, reducing the chances of a peace acceptable to the Allies, they modified their attitude to war credits.

### *Herr Scheidemann*

In this atmosphere of national unity, one of the most prominent leaders of the Socialist Party, Scheidemann, wrote a long letter to the New York *Volkszeitung*,<sup>1</sup> emphasizing that nobody in Germany wanted the war (he underlined the word "nobody"). Scheidemann placed the chief blame for the war on Russia, advancing the pretext that the Russian mobilisation was sufficient to cause the outbreak of war:

"The chief guilt for the present war rests upon Russia. At the very time when the Tsar was exchanging despatches with the German Kaiser and apparently working for peace, he allowed the secret mobilisation to go on, not only against Austria, but also against Germany. When France, Republican France, has allied herself with Russian absolutism for the purpose of murder and destruction, it is difficult to conceive that England, parliamentary England, democratic England, should be fighting side by side with her 'for freedom and civilisation'. That, truly, is a gigantic piece of shameless hypocrisy."

After referring to what he described as England's sole motive, *i.e.*, envy of Germany's economic development, he went on:

"We in Germany are in duty bound to defend ourselves. It is our task to defend our country, where Social Democracy has attained the highest development, against falling into servitude to Russia . . . Russia, France, Belgium, England, Serbia, Montenegro and Japan in the struggle for freedom and civilisation against Germanism, which has given Goethe, Kant and Karl Marx to the world—this would be a joke were not the situation so desperately serious.

"We Social Democrats have not ceased to be Germans because we have joined the Socialist International. And if we unanimously granted the war credits in the Reichstag, we were only doing what our best spokesmen in the Reichstag had often said we would do. Bebel said. 'The working classes are at least as interested in maintaining the independence of Germany as those who regard themselves as the appointed leaders and rulers of the people, and the workers are not prepared to bend their neck under any foreign rule. If it should ever be a matter of saving its own skin, the working class of Germany will be ready to offer its last man.'"

<sup>1</sup> Issue of September 10, 1914.

Scheidemann defended the German invasion of Belgium, accepting von Bethmann-Hollweg's excuse that it was "necessary."

In the closing part of his letter Scheidemann expressed the hope that Germany would conquer France at the earliest possible moment and force peace upon her. He claimed that Germany in the early part of the war had been victorious everywhere, that all statements to the contrary were lies, and that a German victory was absolutely certain . . .

In January 1915, writing in the Hamburg *Echo*, Scheidemann maintained the same point of view:

"We must not indulge in any illusions under present conditions the annihilation of German militarism means nothing less than the annihilation of the German Army a merciless struggle, that is to say, the annihilation of our brothers in uniform."

Even Karl Kautsky, the famous theorist of Socialism, who stood for a far more moderate foreign policy than Scheidemann, in September 1914, published in *Die Neue Zeit* an article exhorting ". . . Russia and Britain to liberate the nations that were under their domination." Not a word, however, about the peoples subjugated by Germany and Austria-Hungary.

### *The Intellectuals*

The intellectuals did not allow themselves to be outdone by the Socialists. They also endeavoured to inflame patriotic sentiment by statements that did not shine with an excess of veracity. Even the language used by these authorised representatives of "Kultur" lacked in moderation.

For instance, the world famous Professors Ernst Haeckel and Rudolf Eucken of Jena, published a "protest" in the *Vossische Zeitung* on August 20, 1914, which included the following passage:

"What is happening to-day will enter the annals of history as England's irredeemable disgrace. England is fighting to assist a semi-Asiatic Power against German nationhood (Volkstum). England is fighting not only at the side of barbarism, but also of moral evil. It must not be forgotten that Russia started this war out of her unwillingness to see a common murder expiated. It is England that is to blame for this war becoming a world war and a menace to the whole of civilisation (Kultur). And why all this? England was envious of Germany's greatness and

desired to curb its further growth at all costs. England was only waiting for a favourable opportunity to destroy Germany, and lost no time to avail herself of Germany's forced march across Belgium as a pretext to disguise her brutal and egoistic nationalism under a veneer of respectability."<sup>1</sup>

To gauge the state of nationalist mentality at the beginning of the war, it is not without interest, either, to quote an opinion expressed by Friedrich Naumann, a theologian and a well-known Reichstag Deputy, who later became one of the founders of the Democratic Party of Weimar. This is what he had to say on Belgian neutrality: "Even if it is assumed that in Belgium there prevailed an equally correct attitude towards neutrality as for example in Switzerland, the question still remains whether a small individual State has the right in all circumstances to stand aside in a historic process of reorganisation (Neugestaltungsprozess). Present-day wars are no longer quarrels pursued as an outlet for surplus energy. They are organic changes in the process of the development of mankind. It so happens that some States and peoples rise, and others fall. For this there must be days of reckoning, when shares in the domination of the world are re-distributed. To-day we are witnessing such a day of reckoning. The struggle is one for the leadership of mankind."<sup>2</sup>

On October 10, 1914, the famous manifesto of ninety-three German intellectuals of international reputation was issued and published in the U.S.A. and in neutral countries. This was its essence:

"It is not true that Germany is guilty of having caused this war . . . It is not true that we trespassed in neutral Belgium . . . It is not true that the life and property of a single Belgian citizen was injured by our soldiers without the bitterest self-defence having made it necessary . . . It is not true that our troops treated Louvain brutally . . . It is not true that our warfare pays no respect to international law . . . It is not true that the struggle against our so-called militarism is not a struggle against our civilisation, as our enemies hypocritically pretend it is . . . The German Army and the German people are one, and to-day this consciousness welds into brotherhood 70 million Germans, all ranks, classes and parties being as one . . . Have faith in us . . ."

Later, after the defeat of 1918, pamphlets were published aiming to prove that none of the signatories wanted the manifesto to be published. Some of the signatories alleged

<sup>1</sup> It is not without interest to compare these charges levelled against Britain during the last war, with the following statement, which occurs in Hitler's speech of November 8, 1943: "One thing is certain. In this war England is the prime moving force, the personification of aggression in unholy compact with the Jews." Apart from the crazy remark about the Jews, what difference is there between the anti-British propaganda of the two wars?

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Die Hilfe*, October 15, 1914.

that they had been ill in bed or absent from home on the date of publication, while others had been asked by telephone to sign the manifesto and were unaware that they had committed themselves. This may indeed have been the case with one or two of them—but alas, the document remains and the spirit and trend of thought by which it was inspired are confirmed by thousands of books, pamphlets and newspaper articles published during the war by leaders of German thought.

### *Blitzkrieg*

In August 1914, right at the beginning of hostilities, the German armies gained enormous successes. Three of the Belgian forts of Namur having fallen, the Allies evacuated the town and began to retreat to the Marne, pursued by the Germans under General von Kluck. The French withdrew from Lorraine upon Nancy, and Lunéville was occupied by the enemy. On August 25, the beautiful city and famous library of Louvain were destroyed by the invaders. The German troops were taking revenge on defenceless Belgian civilians for the proud refusal of their King and Government to surrender to the Reich's will. The outrages were committed not only by individual officers and soldiers, but also and chiefly by order of the higher commanders. The principle of collective responsibility was introduced, a precious precedent for the Nazis, who applied it as a common law in all the occupied countries of Europe. Here is what Herr Walter Bloem said in this connection :

“ This principle (*i e.* that the community must suffer for the crimes of the individual) finds justification in the theory of intimidation. The innocent must suffer with the guilty, and if the latter cannot be detected, then they must suffer instead of the guilty, not because a crime has been committed, but in order to prevent such an occurrence in the future. Every time a village is burned down, or hostages are executed, or the population of a community whose members have taken up arms against the invading troops is decimated, it is far less an act of revenge than a warning to the territories not yet occupied. And there can be no doubt about this, that it is precisely as a warning that the burning of Battice, Herve, Louvain and Dinant has acted. The burnings and bloodshed of the first days has saved the great Belgian cities from the temptation of attacking the small garrisons which we were able to place in them.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Koelnische Zeitung*, February 10, 1915.

The German Command in fact made good use of this doctrine. In a proclamation dated August 22, 1914,<sup>1</sup> which was posted in occupied Belgium, we read :

Armee-Oberkommando

*Abt II b. Irm H 150*

*To the Municipal Authorities of the City of Liège*

The inhabitants of the town of Andenne, after having protested their pacific intentions, have made a treacherous surprise attack on our troops. It was with my consent that the General in command has had the entire locality burned down and that about a hundred persons have been shot.

I notify the city of Liège of this incident, so that the people of Liège may imagine the fate with which they are threatened if they take a similar attitude.

The Commander-in-Chief,

(*sd.*) von Bulow.

A reign of terror having thus been established in Belgium, there was only a single German politician who had the courage to take this fact to heart. This was Karl Liebknecht who, having visited the Belgian theatre of war, was so shocked by the sufferings of the population that he decided thenceforth to fight publicly both the Government and the war policy of the Socialist Party. Others kept silent, pretending to take seriously the denial of the Chief of the German General Staff, which had been published probably in response to the first official report of the Belgian Government on German atrocities. This is what General von Moltke had to say on the occupation régime in Belgium :

"The German Army Command hereby protest against the reports spread by our enemies of atrocities committed by our armies. Any harsh and strict measures that have been applied have been called for and necessitated by the participation of the civil population, including women, in treacherous attacks on our troops and bestial cruelties on our wounded. Responsibility for the harsh measures that have been introduced into our conduct of the war must be laid at the doors of those governments and municipalities of our occupied territories who are supplying their citizens with arms and inciting them to take part in the war. Neither the people nor their possessions have suffered any harm from our troops anywhere where the population have refrained from hostile activities. The German soldier is no pillager and murderer. He only wages war against the hostile armies. The report published in foreign papers that the Germans are driving the people before them is a lie, indicative of the moral level of its originators. Anyone who

<sup>1</sup> Extract, translated from the French.

knows the high cultural development of our people will from the outset consider such a thing impossible."

Army High Command,  
August 28, 1914

(*sd.*) von Moltke.

### *Battle of the Marne*

On August 28, the Allied forces retired to a line behind the Somme. The German Army had successes not only in the West. On the Eastern Front, the Battle of Tannenberg, which began on August 26, ended with a great victory for Generals von Hindenburg<sup>1</sup> and Ludendorff and a heavy defeat for the Russians led by General Rennenkampf. The Russians were more successful in the South, where on September 1, under General Russky, they routed five Austrian army corps (about 250,000 men) at Lemberg (Galicia), taking about 70,000 prisoners.

Between September 3 and 10 took place the famous Battle of the Marne, which decided the outcome of the war by arresting the triumphal progress of the German troops before they could occupy Paris and dictate peace to France. The Schlieffen Plan,<sup>2</sup> worked out by von Moltke's talented predecessor, and carried out unskillfully by von Moltke, had not produced the expected results. This plan provided for a rapid march through Belgium by the right wing of the German Army and a lightning manœuvre designed to surround Paris and crush France. Then the whole German Army was to be flung against Russia. The German High Command, confident of the success of the Schlieffen Plan, persuaded German public opinion that the war was going to be a short affair and that the new conquests would be achieved at a low cost. The word "Blitzkrieg" had not yet been coined, but the idea was already there.

After the smashing defeat of the Marne, the Germans had to make up their minds for a long war, with all the privations involved for the German people. The replacement of von Moltke, on October 5, by General von Falkenhayn, a man of mediocre talent, could not change the result of the Battle of the Marne.

The Progressive Deputy, Conrad Hausmann in his

<sup>1</sup> Who was promoted Field Marshal on November 28, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> See *Die Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs im Jahre 1918*, Reichstag Committee of Investigation, Vol. XII, 1st half, pp. 187-188.



Memoirs<sup>1</sup> records that the war was estimated to last only four months. Thus as hostilities became protracted and the Allied blockade began to tell on the average German, with lengthening queues outside the shops, class conflicts and political disagreements gradually insinuated themselves among the German people. One of the leading industrialists, Dr Walter Rathenau, head of the Raw Material Department of the Ministry of War (Rohstoff-abteilung), became sceptical as early as in 1914. The war, he thought, would cost a total of 150 billions. A near-victory would be equivalent to defeat. "Thus," he said in a private conversation,<sup>2</sup> "we must accomplish the impossible from the economic point of view in order to achieve our ends and, notably, we must immediately confiscate all stocks in Antwerp." Antwerp had then just been occupied—October 9—by General von Beseler. A levy of £20,000 was imposed on the town immediately. A few days later, the Germans occupied Lille. The Belgian Government went to Le Havre in France.

### *War Aims*

The first military successes after the Battle of the Marne, though far from being decisive, produced a spate of war aims memoranda. Such memoranda were produced throughout the rest of the war, and were partly embodied in the treaties imposed on Russia and Rumania. Already on October 29, 1914, von Loebell, Prussian Minister of the Interior, worked out a document that is rendered interesting by the political arguments advanced in it.

The following is an extract from this confidential document:<sup>3</sup>

"... From the political point of view Great Britain has now become an enemy who has set her vital interests against ours, and with whom we must sooner or later settle accounts, because Britain will not tolerate side by side with herself a strong, world-political, powerful Germany. This hostility indicates what cards we must play in future in our world historical game, for we can and must never hope to reach through an incomplete settlement a subsequent understanding bearing a guarantee of permanency . . .

<sup>1</sup> Conrad Hausmann, *Schlaglichter. Reichstagsbriefe und Aufzeichnungen*, Berlin, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Conversation with Conrad Hausmann, *op. cit.* In 1917, Rathenau, like Ballin, was also pessimistic about the prospects of the U-boat campaign.

<sup>3</sup> From *Die Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs im Jahre 1918* (Reichstag Investigation Committee), Vol. 12, pp. 187-188.

"Indeed, we may possibly have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that owing to this Anglo-German conflict valuable cultural achievements in the wider world will be destroyed for ever, and the promising beginnings of European cultural propaganda crushed. This thought is particularly painful to us Germans. But since Germany's life and future are at stake, cultural questions must for the present play a subordinate part. After all, the power and life of Germany are pregnant with stronger and more beneficent cultural forces than any harmony between us and the old Western nations, when that harmony can only be maintained at the expense of German power and expansion. . . . The fact that France is the bravest of our opponents, and the one who has taken up arms from the relatively noblest motives, is not without an aspect of world-historical tragedy. However, it is not our business to inquire into the motives and mentality of our enemies, but into our own German interests and requirements. After all, it is not moral questions that are to be decided in this war.

" . . . Since Russia is a power-political reality which cannot be explained away, and we have no need to enrich ourselves at her expense, we must see how we can make her useful to our world-political interests . . . In connection with Russia it should be taken into account that for nearly a century and a half she has rarely been an inconvenient, but frequently a pleasant neighbour. Not from sympathy for Germany, but because there is actually no tangible conflict of interests between Germany and Russia. The present war of Russia against Germany is based on a temporary, not a fundamental conflict . . . It has been said that it would be a good thing if we had no common frontier with Russia, and that the foundation of a Lithuanian State and some others, in addition to a Polish one, has been mooted. Apart from the fact that States must not be founded unless historical development has prepared the ground, there is no evidence whatever to show that buffer and interposed States would be more convenient and less dangerous for us than the Great Power Russia. Throughout the entire course of Prusso-German history, we have not crossed swords with any neighbour so rarely and so entirely without intrinsic necessity as with Russia . . . The truth is that Russia has by no means been an unbearable neighbour to us, but on the contrary she has been a most convenient one in our most difficult situations.

" . . . Naturally, it will be necessary to demand from Russia far more at first, so that we may obtain what we really want in a manner that will enable Russia to save her face both before the world and herself with comparative ease in regard to the sacrifice of territory along the frontier. It is not sympathy but sound interest that demands that Russia should be spared as much as possible at the Peace Conference. For the question arises again as to how we should arrange the conflict with Great Britain, which is fairly certain to continue after this war, and how we shall be able to regain and develop our position in the Far East.

"However, it is not difficult to turn Russia into our trump card in our world-political game against Britain. Apart from North America, and in addition to Germany, Britain has only Russia to fear, and does fear her. Russia is potentially the most explosive country in Europe,

in addition to which her vast compact territory stretches right across Asia, so that she is able to exert direct pressure on the British world empire at several points where it is most sensitive. Russia has not infrequently followed the highest bidder without scruple, and would be no less useful to us than to Britain and France, especially as she has no points of friction with us anywhere.

"Dispassionate consideration must define it as a grave error, incalculable in its consequences, if we allow ourselves to be misled into shaping the peace in such a manner as to turn Russia into an implacable enemy.

"It is said that the Polish question must be solved by us through this war. That is not true. Actually, there is no Polish problem for us except in our internal policy. In the historical sense it can never be solved completely except to our detriment. In so far as it was soluble in our interest, it was solved through the Polish partitions and at the Vienna Congress. And it was precisely the solution that was found in 1815 that was always, and in the most difficult situations, useful to Bismarck in establishing for Prussian Germany an assured and decisive position beside and between Russia and Austria. Any unprejudiced examination of the question whether the restoration of a Polish State holds any advantages for Germany, in any form whatever, must lead to a negative result. A strong, independent Poland would be inconvenient to us owing to its attraction for our Polish-inhabited territories, which we can never dispense with, above all, all its sympathies would go anywhere—to Russia, Austria, France, Britain—but not to us."

*Karl Liebknecht the only Socialist to Vote against  
Second Instalment of War Credits*

The Reichstag met in December 1914, to debate the second instalment of the war credits. The Chancellor took that opportunity to charge Great Britain with responsibility for the war. This time Liebknecht attempted to explain his refusal to vote for the credits, but the Speaker of the Reichstag, Kaempf, would not allow him to speak. And when, at about the same time, the Socialist Ed. Bernstein suggested in the Leipzig *Volkszeitung* that "the Left had better dissociate itself from this second instalment in view of the obviously modified character of the war"—it being directed against Western Europe rather than against Russia—he was harshly criticised by the majority of other Socialists. An important trade union organ, the *Grundstein*,<sup>1</sup> for example, wrote that it was a scandal that a tiny group should dare to oppose the policy of the Party and thus "stab in the back" the fellow-workers who were at the front.

<sup>1</sup> Trade Union of German Building Workers.

In the end, Karl Liebknecht was the only member of the Reichstag who stayed in his seat when the credits were put to the vote ; fourteen other dissident Deputies were absent from the sitting.

Herr Haase, on December 2, made a statement on behalf of the Socialist group, in the course of which he said :

"As a complement to the Imperial Chancellor's statement concerning Belgium, I declare in the name of my group that the facts that have since become known are not sufficient to cause us to dissent from the point of view expressed by the Imperial Chancellor on August 4, 1914, concerning Luxemburg and Belgium "

### *Winter Campaign, 1914-1915*

In the military sphere the situation of the Allies on the Western Front had slightly improved by the end of 1914. On December 8, a British naval squadron under Sir Frederick Sturdee attacked a German squadron under Admiral Count von Spee near the Falkland Islands, and sank the "Scharnhorst," the "Gneisenau," "Leipzig" and "Nuernberg."

In February 1915, an important but undecisive battle for Warsaw took place, the Russians having withdrawn from Lodz in January ; they retreated also from East Prussia.

The German Admiralty having declared the blockade of the whole of Britain and Ireland as from February 1915, the blockade of Germany by Britain began on March 1. Mr Asquith announced in the House of Commons that no goods of any kind will be allowed to enter or leave Germany. A Note to this effect was sent to the neutrals.

### *The Enemy will Pay*

When Dr Helfferich, Imperial State Secretary, on March 10, 1915, presented his Budget, he, the same man who after the war was to be so indignant over the idea that Germany should pay for the damage caused by her invading armies, said :

"After the war we shall not be able to forego—and we have not the slightest intention of foregoing—our claim that our enemies shall make restitution for all the material damage (quite apart from everything else) they have caused by the irresponsible launching of this war against us."

Dr Helfferich who, with Dr Havenstein, Governor of the Reichbank, dominated Germany's finances during the war, right from the beginning pursued an optimistic policy that seemed inexplicable at a first glance, refusing, notably, to impose any war taxes. In contrast with France and Britain, the Reich had not introduced a moratorium, either. When it was argued that it was necessary to tax war profits, the invariable reply was that it would always be possible to attend to this question after the war. What was the explanation of this attitude? Undoubtedly—if we examine the above statement more closely—it rested on the intention of shifting the entire burden, after the German victory, on the Reich's enemies: France, Britain and Russia.

It was on March 10, too, that the Chairmen of the six leading economic organizations (Agricultural Union, German Farmers' League, Westphalian Farmers' Union, Central Union of German Manufacturers, Federation of Employers, Imperial Middle Classes Union) submitted to the Government a petition on War Aims that would enable the Fatherland to look forward to the future calmly.

The petition read as follows:

"The undersigned associations have considered the question of how far the much-discussed topic of obtaining an honourable peace in this war can be carried into effect, be made commensurate with our losses, and ensure a lasting peace. In answer to this question it must be borne in mind that our enemies are always saying that Germany must be destroyed and disappear from among the Great Powers. To thwart these intentions we shall find no security in treaties, which can be trampled on at any time, but in so weakening our enemies, economically and militarily, that peace may be ensured for a considerable time.

"Coupled with the demand for a Colonial Empire that shall be fully adequate to Germany's many-sided economic interests, the security of our financial and commercial future, and the acquisition of a thoroughly practicable and satisfactory compensation for our war losses, we consider that the chief objective of the struggle that has been forced upon us, lies in guarantees and a remodelling of the former position of the German Empire in the following directions:

"Belgium . . . must be placed under our Central Board of Trade for military and economic purposes, as well as for Customs, Banking and Postal Services. The railways and waterways must be incorporated in our general transport system. The control and management of the country must be transferred to German hands; the Walloon and the Flemish population, which overwhelmingly preponderate, must be

separated, and all important economic undertakings and property handed over to German rule in such a way that the inhabitants shall acquire no influence on the political destinies of the German Empire

"As to France, and in the same way with regard to England, the acquisition of all coastal territory bordering on Belgium as far as the Somme, and an outlet to the Atlantic Ocean, must be considered a vital question for our future position on the sea. Any further acquisitions, apart from the necessary annexation of the mining districts of Briey, must be decided by military exigencies only. In addition to acquiring the line of the Meuse and the French coast on the Channel, possession of the coal districts of the Departments du Nord and the Pas de Calais, apart from the mining districts of Briey, should be conceded. These acquisitions, after our experiences in Alsace-Lorraine, naturally postulate that the population of the absorbed territory should not be able to exercise political influence on the future of the German Empire, and all present economic resources in these districts, inclusive of smaller and larger properties, should be transferred to German hands in such a way that France should compensate and adopt their owners

"As to the East, this single recommendation should suffice, that the big industrial development to be expected in the West should correspond to one of like magnitude and value in the East.

"With respect to granting political rights to the inhabitants of the new territories and the security of German economic influence, what has been said with regard to France should apply. War compensation from Russia would consist mainly in acquisitions of territory.

"The want of harbours, right on the Channel, will, as formerly, cramp our trade overseas. An independent Belgium would be England's bridgehead, her *point d'appui* against us. The natural fortress line in France would mean a constant menace to our frontiers. Russia, if she comes out of the war without loss of territory, will ignore our power and strength to hinder her from interfering with our interests, whereas failure to acquire agricultural land on our Eastern borders would lessen the possibility of strengthening the defensive power of Germany against Russia by an adequate increase of her population

"It should be specially noted at the end of this note that the political, military and economic objects which the German people should do their best to attain are intimately connected with each other and cannot be separated"

### *Reichstag Debate, March 1915*

On March 20, 1915, the Reichstag was for the third consecutive time voting on war loans; the number of "Nays" had doubled—it was no longer, as in December 1914, Liebknecht alone—but he and another man, Ruchle.<sup>1</sup> The number of Socialists absent from the sitting had also

<sup>1</sup> A well known pacifist and collaborator of Bertha von Suttner.

increased. They numbered 30 instead of 15. As to Herr Scheidemann, he made the following statement :

"The reasons that determined our action in voting for the war loans of August 4 and December 2, continue with undiminished force. Because of the marvellous performance of our troops and their leaders, we have the utmost confidence that we shall succeed in reaching an honourable and lasting peace. To strengthen our determination to reach this goal in indissoluble unity with our people, we shall give our consent to the present budget "

It may be recalled that Socialist Conrad Haenisch—later to become Prussian Minister of Education under the Weimar Republic—had declared in the Reichstag (March 3): "I am convinced that it is in the interests of the Fatherland to call a truce in the internal political struggle.

"No party has victory at heart more than the German Social Democratic Party "<sup>1</sup>

A week later, Haase hastened to declare in the Reichstag : "It is precisely the stronger party that may propose peace first." He probably believed that the military gains were sufficient to win a profitable negotiated peace.

### *Statements and Reports on German War Crimes*

In the House of Commons in March 1915, Sir Edward Grey spoke on the origin of the war and on war aims. An essential condition of peace, he said, was the restoration of Belgian independence and reparation to her.

On April 27, Mr Asquith, the Premier, stated that "when we come to the end of this war we shall not forget this horrible record of calculated cruelty and crime, and we shall hold it to be our duty to exact such reparation against those who are proved to be guilty agents as it may be possible for us to do."

Lord Kitchener, in the House of Lords, also vigorously condemned German methods of waging war. Sir John French had just reported that the Germans were using asphyxiating gases. An official despatch sent by Sir John French on September 15, confirmed earlier reports of wanton pillage and destruction by German troops in the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France. French châteaux had been the scene of their debauchery. Carousing amid priceless canvases, tapestries and *objets*

<sup>1</sup> Another time he said : "Not only the immediate interests of International Socialism, but also its future interests imperatively demand a German victory."

*d'art*, the drunken soldatesca only too often took a fiendish delight in destroying historic heirlooms. The German Crown Prince himself had pillaged a château near Champaubert, taking jewellery and medals and destroying pictures. This distinguished representative of Kultur was later placed on the Allied list of war criminals—we know with what result. In another despatch, dated September 18, 1915, Sir John French reported :

“ At Senlis, a poacher shot one German soldier and wounded another. The German Commander then assembled the Mayor of the town and five other leading citizens and forced them to kneel before graves which had already been dug. Requisition was made for various supplies, and the six citizens were then shot . . . The town was then pillaged and fired in several places before it was evacuated. It is believed that the cathedral was not damaged, but many houses were destroyed ”<sup>1</sup>

### *The “Lusitania” Case*

On May 7, 1915, the “Lusitania” was sunk by two German torpedos. This new outrage shocked the world—1,134 passengers, including many Americans, were drowned, and only 700 saved. A week later the U.S.A. sent a stern Note to Germany demanding that the sinking of merchant and passenger vessels shall cease. On July 10, Germany replied to the U.S.A. in a Note justifying the sinking of the “Lusitania.” The Americans were told that if they sailed in British ships they did so at their own risk.

Certain Germans who thought they understood American psychology, fancied that the Imperial Government had been too courteous in its Note of July 10. Von Tirpitz in his Memoirs,<sup>2</sup> relates that Albert Ballin, the well-known Director of the Hamburg-America Line, had strongly criticised the German Note, which had been drafted by State Secretary Helfferich. On August 1, 1915, he wrote to von Tirpitz :

“ I am still entirely opposed to the attitude of the Wilhelmstrasse as regards the further treatment of this American affair. The last Note ought to have been answered immediately, that is, within twenty-four hours, and it would have been so easy to answer it. One simply ought to have said . . . ‘ The Imperial Government deeply regrets to see from the Note which Your Excellency has been kind enough to convey to me on behalf of your Government that the Government of the United States of North America is not prepared to recognise the far-reaching courtesy

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The War Illustrated*, October 17, 1915

<sup>2</sup> *Erinnerungen*, by Alfred von Tirpitz, Verlag K. F. Koehler, Berlin, 1919, p. 355



manifested by the Imperial German Government in its last reply Note. In the circumstances the Imperial German Government can only express the wish that the citizens of the United States should be warned by their Government in a suitable manner not to travel by ships sailing under the flag of enemy Powers and intending to pass through the war zone designated by the German Government.

"In my view, as I said, a brief answer of this kind ought to have been delivered to Mr Gerard within twenty-four hours. The fact that we are again brooding for a fortnight gives the Americans the impression that the responsible men in Germany have got their trousers full again. The fact that the people in Washington are short-sleeved politicians is well known and the treatment of such American affairs ought to be adapted to the psychology of that nation."

It is also interesting to recall that a group of leading German lawyers, including University Professors Binding, Laband, etc., immediately published a scientific treatise entitled *Der Fall "Lusitania"* (*The "Lusitania Case"*), justifying this outrage.

#### *German Intellectuals and War Aims*

On June 15, 1,351 prominent Germans, including, in addition to 352 University professors, many pastors, Catholic priests, Reichstag deputies, generals, admirals and industrialists, at the Kuenstlerhaus in Berlin, signed a confidential petition on war aims addressed to the Imperial Chancellor. France, the petition said, must after the German victory be ruthlessly weakened both politically and economically. "In our conviction this demands a radical improvement of our entire Western frontier, from Belfort to the coast. We must, if possible, acquire part of the Channel coast in Northern France, in order to be strategically secure against Britain and to have better access to the ocean."

As to Belgium, it was to be made impossible for her once for all to serve as a base for British attacks, and she was to become an element of German "surplus power." Russia, with its menace of Slav demographic expansion, would not cease to be a permanent threat to the Germans, unless the latter were protected against her by a strong frontier wall, and unless she were deprived of sufficient territory to ensure for Germany free demographic development. To what extent the German frontier would be shifted eastward would naturally depend on the military situation and on strategic considerations.

As regards Great Britain, said the petition, we must never forget that the war of 1914 is above all Britain's war against the Reich's position in "world economy," at sea and overseas. In order to compel Britain to accept this position, Germany must begin by strengthening her outposts on the Channel and, in addition, disrupt or at least weaken Britain's naval bases. Egypt, connecting British Africa with British Asia and Australia was, according to a Bismarckian saying, the neck of Britain's world empire ("das Genick des englischen Weltreiches"), and it was there that Britain's vital artery must be severed.

Financial demands were added to the territorial aims.

"... We must ruthlessly impose a heavy war indemnity on France . . . And should we be in a position to impose an indemnity on England, no sum would be too great"

The petition concluded as follows :

"Should the scientists, artists and clergymen among the signatories be reproached for confining themselves to considerations of political and economic or social power, and forgetting about Germany's future tasks in the spiritual sphere, we have only one reply to make

- "1. There is no room for concern about the genius of the German people ('die Sorge um den deutschen Geist') among war or peace aims ,
- "2. Germany must have political and economic security before she can freely pursue her spiritual vocation ,
- "3. To those who want the German genius without any policy of force, we say We do not want any German genius if it is to run the risk of dissolution, if it is to be a 'Volksgeist' without roots, if it is to seek, in any case without success, asylum outside Germany, and if there is a risk that there will be no healthy national body"<sup>1</sup>

This too obviously Pan-German petition was criticised by certain Social Democrats, as by Eduard Bernstein, Haase, Kautsky and Otto Braun, but it was approved by other Socialists, as by Max Schippel<sup>2</sup> and Paul Lensch, Chief Editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and Member of the Reichstag.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Grumbach, *Das annexionsstrische Deutschland*, Lausanne, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, No. 7, April 15, 1915.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Glocke, February 1, 1916 The same Lensch, who during the war was for some time liaison officer between the Supreme Command and the Social Democratic Party, concluded his book, *Drei Jahre Welt-Revolution* (Three Years of World Revolution) with the threat "What does the French Revolution of 1789 amount to compared with the huge dimensions of the World Revolution of to-day? The only parallel which history affords to the overthrow of the English world domination by the Germans of to-day is the overthrow of the Roman world domination by the Germanic races of that time. Then, as now, the whole of the known world reeled under the shock. As then, so now. And then will dawn a new epoch for humanity."

*The German Offensive in the East*

On July 15, 1915, an important German offensive was launched by von Hindenburg in the Baltic provinces and in Northern Poland. On July 31, Warsaw was evacuated by the Russians. Kovno, the future capital of Lithuania, fell into German hands on August 18. A week later it was the turn of Brest Litovsk.

*Socialist War Aims and Collaboration in the National War Effort*

Let us now consider the attitude of the German Socialists who, in September 1915, "having the national interest at heart in the first place," drew up the following peace theses in the Reichstag :

"In order to guarantee the political independence and integrity of the German Reich, all enemy aims at conquest directed against Germany's territorial power must be rejected. This also applies to the French claim in connection with Alsace-Lorraine, in any form whatsoever.

"In the interests of German security and freedom of action ('Befreiungsfreiheit') in the South West, we reject any war aim of the Quadruple Alliance tending to weaken or destroy Austria-Hungary or Turkey.

"In order to guarantee economic freedom for the German people, we demand 'an open door,' that is to say, equal rights of economic activity in all the colonial territories, the application of the most favoured nation clause in the Peace Treaties to be concluded with all the belligerents, stimulation of economic rapprochement through the elimination, as far as possible, of obstacles relating to customs duties and transport, and equalisation and amelioration of politico-social institutions in the sense of the aims pursued by the Workers' International. Freedom of the sea must be guaranteed by international agreements. For this purpose the right of capture must be abolished, and the Straits must be internationalised for world traffic."

A little earlier, a collective work on *Die Arbeiterschaft im neuen Deutschland* had appeared in Leipzig, under the joint editorship of the trade union leader Carl Legien and Dr Friedrich Thimme. The *leitmotiv* of the book was: "The war has stimulated intellectual co-operation between the bourgeois and Socialist intellectual worlds"—and it must be continued in peace time. The reader might have been amazed to find in the book contributions by Scheidemann, Legien, Noske, Lensch, Robert Schmidt and August

Winnig side by side with contributions by notorious Pan-Germans like Professor Hermann Oncken, Friedrich Meinecke, and G. Anschütz !

The editors explained :

“ . . . There is, after all, some truth in it that war is the father of all things. What the long peace which the German Reich had enjoyed since its foundation never accomplished—complete unity and solidarity of our nation, a national collaboration of all classes, professions and parties for one purpose—was brought about suddenly, almost overnight, by war. This unanimous national collaboration was documented in the mightiest manner at the sittings of the appointed representatives of the German people, in the Reichstag, particularly at the ever memorable sitting of August 4, but also at the later sittings, those of December, 1914, and March, 1915 ; no doubt, it will again find emphatic expression at the forthcoming sittings in August. It was reflected in the joyous determination of the entire people to make any sacrifice in blood and treasure for the Fatherland, in the converging streams of volunteers, in the tremendous success of our war loans, in the admirable concentration of all our economic and spiritual forces on the aims of national defence, in the social service that was rendered everywhere, in the unity between employers and workers, and in a thousand other ways. The sum total of what our national collaboration has achieved is absolutely wonderful ; it is perhaps the greatest ever attained by any nation.”

And Reichstag Deputy Noske, in this book, gave an analysis of the German Socialists before and during the war. He admitted that “ the German Social Democratic program contains no anti-militarist trend ” and in fact “ contains the demand that the people should be trained for martial fitness.” Then follows this priceless passage :

“ . . . When opposing military equipment and armament expenditure, the Social Democrats made differentiations. When, in the Budget Committee of the Reichstag, confidential information was given concerning the rearmament of the artillery, the Socialists did nothing to frustrate or impede this reform. Scarcely a word was said at the plenary sittings of the Reichstag against expenditure on fortresses, forts, the fortification of Heligoland, and the construction of strategic railways. The means for the rebuilding of the North Baltic Canal, which was completed at the beginning of the war, were granted by the Social Democrats, although the then State Secretary, Count Posadowsky, had declared in the Budget Committee that this was a purely naval bill.”

On October 13, 1915, Miss Edith Cavell, an English nurse in Brussels, was executed by a German firing squad. This case and other similar atrocities did not seem to prevent Eduard Bernstein, one of the Socialist leaders—who, however, later left the Party to become an Independent

Socialist—from expressing the following view (October 24):

' We Social Democrats most earnestly wish that victory should go to German arms. It would be a disaster for all civilisation if this should not be the case . . . '

*"Deutsche Gesellschaft 1914"*

Since the Socialists were prepared to collaborate with anyone in the common war effort, and since their ardent patriotism had reached such levels that it was close to the fanatical nationalism of other political groups, it is not surprising that they should have agreed to exchange views with representatives of German capitalism in a joint club. Such a club was created on November 29, 1915, under the significant style of "*Deutsche Gesellschaft 1914*." At the inaugural meeting General von Moltke, on behalf of the founders' committee, warmly thanked the originators of this patriotic organization: the banker Herbert Gutmann, Professor Ernst Jaekh and Dr Vollmoeller, State Secretary. Dr Solf was elected President.

The Society was composed of the most varied elements of Germany's ruling class: generals, admirals, ambassadors, bankers, industrialists and professors. Here are the names of some members of the Council and the Board of this new organization: Albert Ballin, Admiral von Capelle, Gerhart Hauptmann, von Payer, Walter Rathenau, Wilhelm von Siemens, August Thyssen, Max Reinhardt, the Socialist Suedekum, Professors Kahl, Kampf, von Willamowitz-Moellendorf.

Among the supporters of this organization were: the Grand Duke Adolf of Mecklenburg, Prof. Hans Delbrueck, Emil Kirdorff, Rudolf Mosse, and the Reichstag members Erzberger, Bassermann, von Liszt and the Socialist Lensch.

The policy of the club was exposed in the address of its President, Dr Solf: "The aim of the '*Deutsche Gesellschaft 1914*' is to keep awake among the German people the spirit of unity and patriotism that manifested itself so gloriously in August 1914." Quoting Fichte's words from the *Speech to the German Nation*, the speaker pointed to the similarity of the present exaltation to that of a hundred years ago. "To stir this sacred flame . . . to preserve these precious assets for our children and grand-

children . . . that is the real purpose for which our Society has been founded." The State Secretary spoke of the threatening spirit of mechanisation that was affecting our lives during the last years before the war and of "the winter of dull indolence that was so menacing to German hopes and that was finally driven away only by the sun of the August days of 1914." Dr Solf said that now all sections of the German people were united to a harmonious whole. "This fact enables Germany, small as she is compared with her enemies, to face with the support of her loyal allies, a world in arms, with the inflexible will to win an honourable peace with security for a happy future."

What did "an honourable peace," mean at this time? The official answer was contained in Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg's speech of August 19, 1915: "... The English policy of the balance of power must disappear . . . and the new Europe must be liberated from French intrigues, Muscovite passion of conquest, and British tutelage."

#### *Reichstag Session of December 1915*

The spirit prevailing in the Reichstag at the beginning of December 1915 has been accurately analysed by von Payer,<sup>1</sup> the well-known progressive Reichstag Deputy, who attributed the causes of the dissensions that were appearing on the political horizon of Germany to the following dilemma: the Left feared that the Chancellor had got into the habit of publicly formulating excessive demands, thus diminishing the chances of peace; the Right, with the Conservatives heading the list, were on the contrary, afraid that he was demanding too little. And von Payer drew from these attitudes the conclusion that the second group would do well to change their tactics and in future formulate their program of greater power and possessions in a more general way, that is to say, by omitting to mention for the time being the exact program of the annexations they desired, such as, for example, the annexation of Belgium. This was tantamount to saying that the more experienced politicians in Germany deemed it more prudent not to frighten the Allies by excessive demands and to promote the possibilities of a negotiated

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Conrad Hausmann, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

peace. Once the possibility of a "blitzkrieg" had been eliminated by the result of the Battle of the Marne, Germany began to comprehend that the war might not bring her a decisive victory, and that it was advisable for her to think of a negotiated peace on the basis of the territorial conquests already achieved by the German Army. Some Germans, as Prof. Konrad Bornhak, of Berlin University, consoled themselves by saying that "We are now waging the first Punic War against England" (*Grenzboten*, No. 11, March 15, 1916). In their view, the first world war could not bring decisive victory over Britain, which was generally considered to be Germany's principal enemy. They envisaged two further wars to dispose of the British Empire, which they regarded as the modern Carthage, which was opposing the rise of the new Rome—Germany. This idea might not have been foreign even to the High Command. At all events, the Imperial Government permitted the Reichstag, in December 1915, to talk about the possibility of peace with the Entente, whose strength was growing. With the consent of the Government, the Socialist Deputy Albrecht on December 9 asked the Chancellor "on what conditions he would be prepared to enter into peace negotiations."<sup>1</sup> Scheidemann added that the German Army having already attained its aim as regards security, it was now possible to think of peace. It was sufficient to glance at the war map in order to see the favourable position of the German armies. "Thus we can and indeed must talk about peace." And Scheidemann finally appealed to the Chancellor to formulate the terms upon which the Reich would be prepared to enter into peace negotiations.

In his reply von Bethmann-Hollweg recalled the British war aims: independence for the smaller countries, restora-

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it may be added that a few weeks earlier (November 29, 1915), when the peace question came up for discussion in the Socialist party, the future Opposition moved that the following question should be asked in the Reichstag: "Is the Reich Chancellor prepared to enter into immediate peace negotiations on the principle of renunciation of annexations of any kind by all the participating countries?"

The Majority Socialist leaders vehemently opposed this text and demanded the erasing of the question concerning preparedness for peace without annexations. Scheidemann, Ebert, Richard Fischer, Molkenbuhr and David proposed the following harmless wording for the question: "Is the Reich Chancellor prepared to give information on what conditions he is inclined to enter into peace negotiations?" This question was asked by Deputy Albrecht

tion of Belgium and destruction of Prussian militarism. That meant that Britain wanted to destroy Germany, whose development she viewed with jealous hatred. However, the Reich, whose space now extended from Arras to Mesopotamia, was ready for a long war. It was impossible to vanquish her in the military sense. Bethmann-Hollweg denied that Germany was making any peace proposals, but . . . "if our enemies come to us with peace proposals proper to the dignity of and offering safety to the Reich, then we are always ready to discuss them." Germany, strong in her enormous military successes, repudiated all responsibility for the prolongation of the misery into which Europe had been plunged. As to war aims, the Chancellor stated that he was not in a position to define them in detail; for instance, it was impossible for the Imperial Government to define the guarantees which it would demand in connection with Belgium. In his peroration Bethmann-Hollweg said:

"It is not we who are threatening the small countries. The struggle that has been imposed upon us, is not being waged in order to subjugate foreign nations, but only to defend our life and liberty . . . (Interruption from Dr Liebknecht: 'That is not true') . . . a defensive war leading to a peace which must prevent a recurrence of war."

The Entente Powers received the Chancellor's statement with utter irony.

### "*Mittleuropa*"

This German demonstration—following the Russian retreat from the Carpathians in the summer of 1915—coincided with an intensive effort by German politicians and economists for an economic alliance between the German Reich and Austria-Hungary. It was a revival of previous schemes for a permanent Austro-German economic union. The idea was that Germany and the Dual Monarchy formed a natural political and economic system, stretching from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Danube. The prophet of this gospel was a member of the Reichstag, pastor Friedrich Naumann, author of the famous book *Mittleuropa*.<sup>1</sup> According to him, German efforts to establish peaceful relations with France had

<sup>1</sup> Reviewed by *The Times*, December 6, 1915.



failed. Neither with England nor with Russia was permanent co-operation possible. After the war, trench-warfare would continue in the economic sphere, inasmuch as Western and Eastern Europe would be thenceforth divided by two long walls running from North to South (Lower Rhine-Alps; Baltic Region-Rumania).

The doctrine of "Central Europe," *i.e.*, a "German-Austro-Hungarian League"—with adequate ports in the North Sea and the Mediterranean at its disposal would be the best cure.

In his book Naumann expressed himself on the fate of Germany's small neighbours, as follows:

"The small nations have only the choice between isolation and 'linking up' and as isolation will become within a generation almost intolerable for them, they must sooner or later decide with which League they will or can march in the spheres of geography, production and intellectual development. No resistance or lamentation will avail them . . . Small States, unable to carry on a tariff war, but in daily need of importing and exporting will in future be compelled 'to open accounts' with one or other of the great world firms"

It should be noted that at this time the Berlin-Baghdad policy was again strongly advertised, direct rail communication between Berlin and Constantinople having already been resumed.

However, Naumann's doctrine, though it pleased those Germans who had been discouraged as regards "Weltmacht" and the colonial ambitions of the Reich, was rejected by industrial, trading and shipping circles. On February 16, 1916, the Prussian Minister of Commerce, von Sydow, declared in the Landtag: "Germany needs economic and industrial traffic with her Allies, but we need it also with neutral countries and the countries that are our enemies to-day. We shall not in future be able to do without the world markets for German industry and trade." And the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in a series of articles<sup>1</sup> expressed, *inter alia*, such views as the following: "Neither Austria-Hungary nor the Balkans, to which Austria-Hungary forms our bridge, can be a substitute for the free world-empire of buying and selling . . . The British will have to decide what they want. If this war at last brings them to their senses, it is not impossible that the gulf may be bridged. But if they stick to their arrogant claims

<sup>1</sup> See "The Times" *History of the War*, Vol. XI, p. 364.

of naval supremacy, sooner or later it must come to a final struggle, in which the British Empire will collapse . . . ”

### *Socialist Split*

Liebknecht, as we have seen, had since the beginning of the war dissociated himself from the annexationist policy, as had Rosa Luxemburg, who had founded the militant Spartacist movement.<sup>1</sup>

But December 1915 saw the first schism in the Socialist Party itself. When the Party decided, despite von Bethmann's arrogant speech, to grant to the Government a fresh war loan of 10,000 million marks, twenty members of the Party considered it incompatible with their duty to allow themselves to be condemned to silence any longer by Party discipline. On December 21, 1915, they openly voted against the war loan in the Reichstag, and presented, through Curt Geyer, a reasoned statement against plans of conquest. Thus was created the nucleus of the Socialist Opposition which, after its formal exclusion from the Party in March 1916, was to become the Independent Socialist Party (U.S.P.D.).

But it was a very small group. The ranks of the dissidents grew only to a very insignificant extent during the rest of the war, the overwhelming majority of the Socialists remaining faithful to the nationalist program until the military collapse.

On January 8, 1916, the Socialist Parliamentary Committee passed a motion violently attacking Haase and the nineteen other members of the Reichstag who, the previous December, had refused to vote for new war loans : “The approval of the war loans by the party on December 21, 1915, was well founded. It was the logical sequel to the policy adopted on August 4, 1914, the conditions upon which it was based being still present. The enemy as yet shows no inclination for peace, but is on the contrary determined, as before, on the economic and military over-

<sup>1</sup> The “Spartakusbund” (Spartacus League) derived its name from the “Spartakus Letters.” These were published from December 1914, at first under the heading “For Information” and from August 1915 until October 1918, under the heading “Political Letters (Spartakus).” The principal collaborators were Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Julian Karski, Ernst Meyer.

The “Spartakusbund” was formed in 1916. At that time it had only a few thousand members. After the formation of the Independent Social Democratic Party at Easter, 1917, the “Spartakusbund” joined it, but formed an autonomous section, retaining its own organisation.

throw of Germany and her Allies. The frustration of the policy of our party by the conduct of the nineteen members who, in contravention of its decision, refused the loans and issued a separate statement, deserves the severest condemnation. This separate action at the same time represents a flagrant breach of the best traditions of the labour movement and endangers the unity and striking power of the Party in a most perilous manner. It is not calculated to strengthen the peace move undertaken by the Party as a whole and in no way serves the interests of the working class. . . The conduct of Comrade Haase, in particular, deserves the severest reproof. By participating in this breach of discipline, he has again offended against the duty imposed upon him by his office as Chairman of the Party organisation."

On January 12, Dr Liebknecht and Ruehle<sup>1</sup> were expelled from the Socialist Party. Herr Haase was replaced, as Chairman of the Parliamentary party, by Ebert, who never departed from the official party attitude. Even in the fourth year of war, in a Reichstag speech of March 22, 1918, he said :

" . . Thus in the West our country is still defending herself against enemies possessing numerical superiority who are threatening the vital interests of our people. Therefore, we shall agree to the war credits demanded."

On March 24, 1916, a very lively meeting took place in the Reichstag. Deputy Haase was howled down as a traitor by the House for saying that "there should be no victors on either side." Amid the uproar of hostile cries, Haase was supported only by a handful of other dissident Socialist Deputies. To the rest, that is, to the overwhelming majority, they were just traitors.

During this session, following the expulsion of Liebknecht and Ruehle, eighteen other Deputies, including Bernstein, Dittmann, Curt Geyer, Haase, Ledebour, Stadthagen and Vogtherr, were in their turn expelled from the Socialist Party. The expelled Deputies formed the "Sozialdemokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft."

Thus the split in the Socialist Party became formally accomplished: on one side—the nationalistic majority, on the other—the minority faithful to their principles.

#### *Debate on the Submarine War*

At the beginning of 1916 an animated discussion on submarine warfare took place, which was to continue throughout the rest of the war. The question was forced

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Vossische Zeitung*, January 14, 1916.

into the foreground when the progress of the German Army on the Western Front was checked. The protagonists of all-in submarine warfare, that is, extending even to neutral merchant vessels sailing for Allied ports, asserted that the only means of bringing Britain to her knees was a complete blockade of her shores by German submarines. They were hoping to make up in this way for the absence of decisive victories on land. The opponents of this view feared that even all-in submarine warfare would not be sufficient to starve out the British Isles, but that, on the other hand, it might bring in the United States on the side of the Allies, thus tipping the scales in their favour. Opinion was sharply divided, not as regards the humaneness of using the submarine weapon (that factor never entered into the discussion), but solely as regards the opportuneness of employing it at the risk of compromising Germany's relations with the neutrals. Of course, the High Command and the Admiralty, with Grand Admiral von Tirpitz in the lead, were heart and soul in favour of the extension of the submarine war to neutral ships. The German Admiralty hoped that 600,000 tons or so of shipping could be sunk per month—the earlier the better. There lay the reason of their insistence and their optimism. Tirpitz records in his *Memoirs*<sup>1</sup> that on June 26, 1915, the Admiral of the Fleet, Holtzendorff, wrote the following to the Staff of Admirals: "In my view, which is shared by the entire Fleet, we must show no leniency in the U-boat war."

The leadership of the political struggle for the U-boat war was in 1915 assumed by the six great economic Federations of Germany,<sup>2</sup> which in petitions addressed to the Reich Chancellor demanded that "consideration of American interests must not go so far that Germany should abandon the sharpest weapon which she has at her disposal to-day for the economic war against Britain."

The Conservatives, like for instance Count Zeppelin, inventor of the dirigible, who at the age of seventy had again donned a uniform, were anxious that unless a big combined aerial and submarine attack was immediately decided upon, Germany ran the risk of losing the war.

<sup>1</sup> See *Erinnerungen*, p 361

<sup>2</sup> Cf also Erzberger's *Meine Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg*, p 216

The Chancellor at that time opposed these "all out" tactics, for he had good reason to fear the reaction of the United States, whose public opinion was getting less and less comfortable for Germany. Thus there was a latent conflict between the Admiralty and von Bethmann-Hollweg. It was to last until the autumn of 1917, when the Supreme Command succeeded in dislodging the Chancellor.

On February 29, 1916, von Bethmann-Hollweg presented to his Government a long confidential memorandum,<sup>1</sup> revealing his doubts as to the efficacy of submarine warfare :

"The declaration of U-boat warfare in the form in which the Admiralty proposes to carry it on, that is, the indiscriminate torpedoing, without warning, of cargo and passenger ships sailing under neutral as well as under enemy flags, would certainly entail the entry of the United States into the war on the side of our enemies

" . . . Provided this assumption is correct, the decision whether ruthless U-boat warfare is to be adopted must depend on an examination of the following questions

- "1. Is there any certainty that, as anticipated by Admiral von Holtzendorff, the new U-boat campaign would, within the period stated, bring about a reduction of approximately 4,000,000 tons in the available cargo space of the British merchant navy?
- "2. Can we assume with certainty that the anticipated damage to the British merchant navy will force Britain to make peace?
- "3. What consequences would the probable entry of the neutrals, in particular of America, into the war produce?"

The memorandum contained the further statement that "another 'Lusitania' is absolutely certain to lead to a break with America."

The same hesitations were reflected in the Reichstag debate of March 1916, but the majority were leaning towards the Admiralty thesis, and this led them to adopt a critical attitude towards the Chancellor, whom they accused of being timid and of exaggerating the importance of American intervention. The three principal bourgeois parties tabled the following draft Resolutions in this matter :

#### Conservatives :

"In view of Britain's attempt to subdue our people through isolation and hunger, and of the consequent extension of the present war beyond the Forces to the entire population, the ruthless employment of all our

Quoted after his *Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege*, Vol II, p. 260.

military means is necessary, so that we on our part should also fight her through her food supply and her national forces

"The recently published decision of the rulers of the Reich concerning the conduct of the submarine war, should only be regarded as a suitable measure for this purpose if its effective practical execution in accordance with the nature of the weapon is assured "

National Liberals, being of the opinion that Germany :  
". . . is in a position by means of unrestricted and ruthless U-boat warfare to increase Britain's shortage of cargo space, that the adequate provision of the British people with foodstuffs and raw materials can be rendered extremely difficult, perhaps even impossible, and the war can thereby be brought to an earlier conclusion with a German victory. "

The National Liberal Party appealed to the Imperial Chancellor :

". . . not to enter into any arrangement with other Powers that might be calculated to impede us in the unrestricted use of the U-boat weapon, but to see to it that on Germany's part the U-boat weapon shall be used within the war zone in the trade war as well, quite apart from passenger ships serving only for the transport of passengers, in the manner corresponding to the technical nature of the weapon "

The Catholic Centre Party had originally shared the fears of the Chancellor as to possible conflict with America ; but it modified its attitude and accepted the opinion of the Imperial Admiralty, with the exception of one or two Catholic Reichstag Deputies, such as Erzberger, who remained sceptical in regard to the effects of the sinking of Allied shipping. Finally, the Centre Party, with the unanimous agreement of its ninety-one members, submitted to the Reichstag the following Resolution :

"Since the submarine has proved to be an effective weapon against Britain's conduct of the war, the Reichstag expresses the expectation that, in view of the fact that the employment of the submarine weapon has not yet been regulated in international law, the freedom to use this weapon shall be safeguarded in any negotiations with foreign States."

On March 30, 1916, the following Resolution, for submission to the Reichstag, was passed unanimously but for one vote, by a Parliamentary committee representing the aforesaid as well as all other political parties ; it represented a compromise between the initial drafts :

"As the submarine has proved to be an effective weapon against Britain's method of warfare, which is calculated to starve Germany out, the Reichstag expresses its conviction that it is necessary to make such use of U-boats, equally with all our other military means, as will guarantee the achievement of a peace that will secure Germany's future,

and to safeguard in negotiations with other States the freedom in the use of this weapon (with due regard to the legitimate interests of the neutral States), which Germany requires to maintain her sea power"

This Resolution was moved and supported on behalf of their respective parties, among others by the Conservatives Count von Westarp and von Heydebrand, by the National Liberals von Bassermann and Schiffer, by Groeber (Catholic Centre), by the Progressive Müller-Meiningen and, finally, by the Social Democrats Ebert and Scheidemann.

During the ensuing debate, Ebert, the future President of the Weimar Republic, said :<sup>1</sup>

" . The enemy Powers have set their hopes on our economic exhaustion. Britain is endeavouring to fight out the starvation war against our people by every means : A vigorous resistance is indicated against this attempt to throttle us, which is being carried on regardless of international law and the rights of neutrals Here we are fighting for our existence We have right on our side if we reply to the British hunger blockade with the U-boat war No one can complain about that It was the British Admiralty that, in peace-time, prevented the abolition of the right of capture at sea and a modernisation of international law. Britain is making ruthless use of the right of capture at sea. The U-boat war is only a measure of self-defence against it " <sup>2</sup>

Again, the few isolated Socialist Deputies—the minority group—presented a motion against the U-boat war in the following terms :

" The provisions of international law must also apply to U-boat warfare. In particular, unrestricted U-boat warfare, that is, the torpedoing without warning of cargo and passenger ships of enemy and neutral States, must on no account be introduced The Reichstag expects that the Reich Chancellor should seek an understanding between the nations by the earliest initiation of peace negotiations."

On April 5-6, the Reichstag debate continued.<sup>3</sup> In the course of a long speech, von Bethmann-Hollweg informed the Reichstag that the pre-war guarantee of Belgium's neutrality was a thing of the past and that Germany should henceforward be given sufficient guarantees that Belgium would not in future become a vassal State under Anglo-French domination. Proclaiming, further, that it was Germany's duty to protect the traditions and language of the oppressed Flemish national group of Belgium, von

<sup>1</sup> Reichstag speech, April 5, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Friedrich Ebert *Schriften, Aufzeichnungen, Reden*. Vol. 1, pp. 319-320.

<sup>3</sup> A. Rosenberg, *Op. cit.*, p. 108 and p. 113 (No 22)

Bethmann-Hollweg endorsed the aims of the Pan-Germans as to the disruption of the Belgian nation.

The Chancellor continued :

" In the endeavour to starve us out and isolate us, and extend the war to the whole of the German people, including our women and children, Britain and her Allies have shown an utter disregard of the right of neutrals to trade with the Central European countries . . . No neutral, whether sympathetic or not, can expect us not to defend ourselves against this hunger war that is contrary to international law, and to allow the means of defence that we possess to be wrested from us. We are using these means and we must use them . . . "

The Chancellor's view was supported by the spokesman of the Catholic Centre, Dr Martin Spahn, who said :

" Peace aims must be power aims. The war must end with a concrete result. As regards the East, the Reich Chancellor has shown us the concrete result more clearly. As regards the West he has expressed himself with greater caution. Belgium has at any rate been treated so that it should not be possible for it any longer to be a bulwark of Britain, but that it should be in our hands politically, militarily and economically.

" We do not want a war of conquest, but we must rectify our frontiers in accordance with our own interests . . . "

At this point we propose to bring into relief the attitude of Dr Stresemann, future Chancellor and Foreign Minister under the Weimar Republic, as well as the statement of Scheidemann, the man who was to proclaim the Weimar Republic.

Stresemann said :

" We see the strongest guarantee of peace for Europe in a policy of expansion. When have we exploited the embarrassments of other peoples? When Russia was at war with Japan, the Tsar was able to take his last regiment away from our frontier. We did not regard Morocco as an object of war, we looked on while East Africa was divided, while France was creating a great colonial empire of Tunis, Algiers and Morocco, while Italy occupied Tripolis, while Persia was divided between Britain and Russia into two spheres of interest—the world could always rely on the German Kaiser's and the German people's love of peace. And what thanks have we had? A world of enemies . . . When one awakens in this way from a beautiful dream one must not follow that dream again, must not in future believe that renunciation of a world policy will be a guarantee of permanent freedom. They grudged us the right to economic development. We thank the Chancellor for what he said yesterday concerning our security in the East and West."

Scheidemann said :

" The Reich Chancellor has said that in many respects a new Europe would emerge from this way. One must be an infant in politics to imagine that after a whole Continent has been in flames, after millions



of people have been killed and immeasurable cultural values have been destroyed, everything will remain as before, and that not a single boundary stone, perhaps set by a long decayed diplomat, will be moved."

Von Bethmann-Hollweg's apprehensions as regards the U.S.A. were soon confirmed. On April 18, 1916, President Wilson sent a Note to Germany demanding that she should abandon her piracy or the U.S.A. will sever relations with her. This was the first step towards America's entry into the war. Perhaps thanks to this warning, the decision to launch the unrestricted U-boat war was further deferred.

*Hindenburg and Ludendorff Appointed Supreme  
Commanders of German Forces*

The first stage of the Battle of Verdun began on February 21, 1916. The Germans failed to take the fortress. The taking of the forts of Douamont and Vaux, and the subsequent attacks in May, June and July were all insufficient to give them the final result they had hoped for. "*On les aura*" was the watchword of the French. The Germans allowed themselves to be slaughtered *en masse*, while their Supreme Command was hoping to destroy the French Army by a process of attrition. Meanwhile, a million British troops had arrived on the Continent to attempt an offensive on the Somme.

May 30 was already the hundredth day of the Battle of Verdun. The following day, in the great naval battle off Jutland, Admiral Beatty engaged the German Battle Fleet off the Danish coast: eighteen German warships were sunk against fourteen British. The summer of 1916 began under unfavourable auspices for Germany. General Ludendorff, author of a plan *à la* Schlieffen in the East, had earlier suggested a great encircling movement against the Russian Army through Courland and Lithuania. However, his plan did not find favour with the then Chief of the General Staff, von Falkenhayn.

Allied manpower was steadily expanding. Rumania, leaning towards the stronger side, declared war on Austria-Hungary (August 27). It is true that, Russia having failed in her undertaking to guard the Dobrudja and the Danubian frontier, Rumania soon became the object of a vigorous double attack: by General von Falkenhayn—who had

meanwhile been transferred from General Head Quarters to the front—from the North, and by Field Marshal von Mackensen, at the head of German-Bulgarian forces, from the South and East. As a result Bucharest soon fell and the Rumanian Army was incapable of defending itself, except in Moldavia. But the Rumanian campaign placed an additional strain on German manpower.

On August 29, Italy came into the war against Germany.

The Russian Army, though it had lost some big battles, had not yet been destroyed. France, on her part, was holding magnificently; the first Australian and New Zealand troops had disembarked in France some months earlier (May 8).

The great Battle of the Somme began on July 1, 1916, and lasted until November. Though the Allies failed to pierce the German lines, the bloody struggle nevertheless cost the Kaiser's forces very dear.

After General von Falkenhayn had been sacked in August 1916 he was replaced by Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, while Ludendorff was appointed to act as the latter's second. That is to say, General Ludendorff came to the fore when the war had already been conducted for two long years by Generals who were unequal to their task (von Moltke, then von Falkenhayn). He was a highly talented strategist and had no regard for anyone. However, the chance of achieving a military victory had in the meantime vanished.<sup>1</sup>

Ludendorff was the brains of the General Staff and was working in the shadow of the impressive figure of Hindenburg, who was himself not endowed either with outstanding military ability or with a brilliant intelligence. Ludendorff immediately seized the reins in directing military operations. He also rapidly increased his political influence, so much so that by the end of 1916 nothing happened in Germany against his will. Ludendorff became the *de facto* dictator of Germany; Hindenburg gave him a free hand. The one had the real power, the other, the glory. Ludendorff owed both his accession to power and his growing political control of the Reich to the industrialists, who saw in him

<sup>1</sup> "In their joy at having at last a real leader," wrote A. Rosenberg, "the German nation entrusted General Ludendorff with absolute political authority, and thus even what might have been saved—was lost." (*Birth of the German Republic*, p. 84.)

the genius that Providence had given to Germany. They did not realise that the time had long passed when even a man of genius could have brought victory to Germany. The industrialists had had a "hunch" since 1915 that Ludendorff was the man the Reich needed. In 1915 Hugo Stinnes and Walter Rathenau visited him at the Eastern Headquarters at Kovno (Lithuania). They had at the time backed the "right horse," because when a year later Ludendorff became the ruler of Germany, he played openly into their hands. One need only compare the aims of economic circles in Germany and those that figured in Ludendorff's *Memorandum on War Aims* of September 1917, to have no doubts in that respect. When eventually Ludendorff became master of the Reich, he was supported by the Conservatives, the National Liberals and the Catholic Centre, and not in the least opposed by the Majority Socialists.

### *Exploitation of Belgium*

The Germans had in the course of 1916 organized what they called the "liquidation" in Belgium. Three companies had been formed in the Ruhr territory: the "Industriegesellschaft 1916 m.b.H.," the "Verkehrsgesellschaft 1916 m.b.H." and the "Bodengesellschaft 1916 m.b.H." The shareholders of these companies included the "Friedrich Krupp A.G.," the "Phoenix A.G.," the "Gutehoffnungshuetten A.G." and the "Deutsch-Limburgische Bergwerke A.G.," Hugo Stinnes being associated with the last-named company. These companies acquired considerable influence in connection with the execution of the economic measures planned for Belgium. They were favoured, in particular, as regards the purchase and management of Belgian interests, especially coal and iron mines, and ran the Belgian gas, water and electricity undertakings. This economic process of "bringing Belgium into line" proceeded parallel with the deportation of Belgian labour to Germany. As these deportations aroused world indignation, it is not without interest to identify one of the principal initiators of the scheme. We are referring not to a Pan-Germanist, nor a soldier, nor yet a Junker, but to Dr Walter Rathenau, president of the electrical trust, the

A.E.G., and economic adviser to the German Government. He advocated the scheme in a letter he sent to General Ludendorff :

“ Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-gesellschaft Praesidium

Berlin, N W.

Friedrich—Karl Ufer 2-4

September 16, 1916

“ Your Excellency,

In the course of a business trip to Switzerland, from which I returned this morning, I had occasion to gather from influential friends who have stayed for a considerable time in Petersburg, Paris and Northern Italy, some impressions that may perhaps be of interest to Your Excellency

The essence of these impressions is given in the enclosure

As regards to-day's discussion between the Minister of War and the leaders of great industrial works, Your Excellency will presumably already have received official reports

I venture to add my personal view that the necessary stepping-up of the armament industry is practicable, but that a number of fundamental measures are necessary as a prerequisite.

I trust that the establishment of the new supply organ under the management of General Coupette—a happy choice—corresponds to internal requirements, which mainly consist in this that instead of the spasmodic increase and diminution of the demand, it should be steady, as otherwise industry will be deprived of its elasticity. The principal points which in my view must be added are :

1. A comb-out of area garrisons for surplus forces, examples of which are known to me,
2. Solution of the problem of Belgian labour, which, regardless of questions of international prestige, can only be effected if the 700,000 workers available there can be brought to the home market, even if this should destroy the American aid scheme.

I am,

Your Excellency's  
obedient Servant

HIS Excellency  
Infantry General Ludendorff,  
First Quartermaster General,  
General Headquarters ”

(sd ) Rathenau.

### *The Liebknecht Trial*

While the Belgian workers were being deported *en masse* to Germany (the Nazis have not invented anything new !) the German workers went on labouring docilely, submitting in this matter to the directives of the Majority Socialist Party. The anti-militarist movement of the

Spartacists failed to gain a hold over the popular masses, which preferred an Ebert or a Scheidemann to a Karl Liebknecht. On May 1, 1916, Liebknecht, who within the Spartacist movement was associated with Rosa Luxemburg (whose famous anti-militarist pamphlet had then just appeared, under the pseudonym *Junius*) was arrested during a Berlin street demonstration.<sup>1</sup> He was tried by a court martial and was on June 28, 1916, sentenced to four years' hard labour. This severe sentence did not add to the popularity of the Spartacists.

On October 11, 1916, a fresh foreign affairs debate took place in the Reichstag. This time it was Dr David, Majority Socialist, who spoke for his Party. He said :

"We are all longing for an early peace. But the inclination to peace must first become general. The question is whether there is a desire to make peace on the basis of the present military situation. Opinion is divided. The Reich Chancellor's statements show that he is prepared to make peace at any time if he were approached with offers by the enemy. At the moment the prospect of peace is slight. The enemy does not want a premature peace before Germany is struck down. However, the most ruthless war against England, that is, intensified U-boat warfare, would not bring peace nearer, but would prolong the war. We understand the anger and hatred that exists among the German people against Britain. That is due to the hunger war and the entirely brutal conduct of the war on the part of Britain. . . . Our enemies must in the end realise that they will never be able to overcome Germany. I do not think that the time is very far when this will be realised in Britain, France and Russia. The enemy's hope of internal dissension in Germany is futile. The second hope lies in the British hunger plan. That, too, must be dashed."

A fortnight later (October 27, 1916), Friedrich Ebert spoke :

"We are again faced with a demand for war credits. To our deep regret, we are bound to find that even now there is no prospect of an early peace. The statements of the statesmen of the countries waging war against us contain no trace of a readiness for peace. They still adhere to their threat to overthrow and annihilate us. They still hope that they will be able to turn the military situation in their own favour and dictate peace to Germany, a peace that would be entirely irreconcilable with the political, economic and cultural development of our country. Indeed, even leading Socialist circles in the enemy countries are unfortunately still proclaiming war aims that affect the preservation of the German Reich. The readiness manifested on our part for a peace of understanding that would violate none of the countries concerned, has recently again been most bluntly rejected. In view of this state of affairs, we

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rosenberg, *Op. cit.*, pp. 120 and 208.

are still faced with the necessity of granting the means required to defend our country against the attacks of a numerically superior enemy on all fronts ”

Was there any real difference between his point of view and that of Spahn, a member of the Catholic Centre Party or that of the Liberal Stresemann, or even that of the Pan-German Westarp ?

During the same Reichstag sitting, the debate on submarine warfare was again renewed. Admiral von Capelle, the new State Secretary to the Admiralty, made a speech in favour of unrestricted U-boat warfare ; he went so far as to say :

“ We do not doubt that America possesses enough men to train as soldiers. But before they are trained, the destruction of enemy shipping will be such that no shipping space at all will be available to bring the troops to Europe. Should America build new ships, my U-boats will be glad of the new hunting grounds that will be opened to them. I estimate the effect of American intervention as equal to nought ”<sup>1</sup>

While the National Liberals and the Parties of the Right were in favour of an immediate launching of the U-boat war against neutral ships, the Social Democrats hesitated because of the complications which this might provoke in international relations. The Catholic Centre contended, through Deputy Groeber, that although the Reich Chancellor alone was responsible for the political decision relating to the conduct of the war, this decision “ must essentially be based on the opinion of the Supreme Command. If the latter is prepared to carry on a ruthless U-boat war, then the Reich Chancellor may be sure of the consent of the Reichstag.”

Groeber's statement was made on behalf of all the members of the Centre Party. Deputy Bassermann (National Liberal) on October 11, 1916, said in the Reichstag :

“ . . . The Chancellor's strong expression that a German statesman who shrunk from using against England any suitable means calculated to shorten the war deserved to be hanged, was intended as a protest against the reproach that the Reich Chancellor's attitude is due to factors that

<sup>1</sup> In this connection Stresemann, in October 1918, made these observations before the representatives of his party “ We had to rely on this authority. The Reichstag cannot be reproached. The fact that only few American soldiers were sunk and that the transportation of the American troops was not even seriously disturbed, was the catastrophic disappointment of this war.” (From the evidence of Deputy Dr Moses in the *Committee of Investigation*, Vol 7, Part 1, p 83 )

shun the light of day. But now we expect that all means should be used against England ruthlessly and unhampered by any false humanitarianism towards our enemies. It is our unanimous conviction that if the war is conducted in this way it will be shortened and bring us nearer to victory. . . "

As the situation on the Western Front remained stationary, the partisans of the Admiralty increased in numbers. It was hoped that unrestricted U-boat warfare would bring victory more surely than land battles. Hostility against Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg grew. The leaders of the bourgeois parties—Count von Westarp (Conservative), von Bassermann (National Liberal) and Dr Spahn (Catholic Centre)—were increasingly leaning towards the view of the High Command that the Chancellor should be thrown overboard and that the U-boat war against neutral shipping should then be declared. The Chancellor felt the ground being cut from under his feet, and finally, in a letter he wrote to Marshal von Hindenburg on December 24, 1916, he accepted, in principle, the Admiralty's point of view :

"Concerning the question of unrestricted U-boat warfare, up till now I have been of the opinion that this can only be considered in case our military situation affords the certainty that the European Neutrals will refrain from attacking us. Your Excellency believes that this time will have arrived at the end of January, 1917. I may therefore assume that Your Excellency will by that time be in a position to concentrate the necessary troops on the Dutch, as well as on the Danish frontier. On this condition, and provided I can convince myself through Your Excellency that the advantages of the whole ruthless U-boat war are greater than the disadvantages of America's joining our enemies, I shall be prepared to consider the question of unrestricted U-boat warfare as well. There is no objection to the initiation of discussions with the Supreme Command of the Army and the head of the Corps of Admirals, as soon as our peace move ends in a definite way through a possible reply from the Entente.

"In connection with the diplomatic handling of the whole question I shall, naturally, fully take into account the atmosphere in the Army as stressed by Your Excellency.

(*sd.*) von Bethmann-Hollweg."

### *Supreme Command's War Aims*

The growing influence of the High Command may also be measured by the fact that it became the indisputable centre for the elaboration of the Reich's war aims. A revealing document in this connection is the catalogue of

war aims of November 6, 1916, dated from the castle of Prince von Pless in Upper Silesia, then the headquarters of the Supreme Command:

TELEGRAM (No 895)

FROM COUNSELLOR OF LEGATION V. GRUNAU TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Rec Berlin, November 6th, 1916

Pless (Headquarters)

Confidential

November 5th, 1916.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR.

The General Field-Marshal submits the following answers to Your Excellency's telegram of yesterday

I agree with the fundamental conceptions of the peace move, provided it is undertaken after the contemplated acceptance of the Hilfsarbeiter-gesetz has been announced in solemn form. That we cannot afford to delay in the matter of this law, is made obvious by the necessity of obtaining workmen at once

I agree to the following peace terms

1. Recognition of the Kingdom of Poland. Modifications of the Prussian frontier to our advantage on the Polish side. The establishment of economic relations between Poland and Germany, decisive interest in the railway system, and other economic advantages in Poland.

2. Delimitation of frontiers on the east by annexation up to the line, Gulf of Riga to the west of Riga, passing Vilna to the east in the direction of Brest-Litovsk. Hereby, and with the inclusion of the Kingdom of Poland we shall gain a good strategic frontier against Russia, running from north to south

3. Guarantees in Belgium. Absorption of the mineral wealth of the Campine. Economic link with Germany, taking over the railway system. Right of occupation. I am absolutely in agreement that the negotiations should be taken up with King Albert personally. The annexation of Liege with corresponding stretches of territory if right of occupation is not granted to a satisfactory extent. War indemnification.

4. Evacuation of the French occupied territory, with the exception of the coal districts of Briey and Longwy, in return for evacuation of the territory in Alsace on the part of the French in consideration of deferred war indemnities and compensations. In my opinion, we cannot undertake to discuss any delimitation of boundaries in favour of France, and, on the contrary, such delimitations of boundaries in connection with Alsace and Lorraine are to be considered in our own interest.

5. Return of the colonies, with the exception of Kiaochow, the Carolines, and the Mariana Islands, in connection with the general understanding with regard to colonies. Acquisition of the Congo State.

6. Luxembourg to take her place as a member of the German Confederation of States

7. Indemnification of Germans residing abroad.

With regard to the terms of Austria-Hungary, I agree with the views concerning the Balkan peninsula. The extension of the territory of Bulgaria at the expense of Serbia will facilitate the acquiescence on



the part of Bulgaria to return Kavala and those frontier areas which were taken away from Turkey at the beginning of the Balkan war Valona should be turned over to Greece, if possible

Austria-Hungary must be satisfied with the re-establishment of the boundaries of Italy and Russia, in view of the advantages gained by it with regard to the Balkan peninsula. Perhaps it will be possible to get boundary adjustments for Austria-Hungary in Rumania (Iron Gate, Bistritza Valley)

My counter-question with regard to the first sentence, which is in conflict with His Majesty's telegram No 891, revealed the fact that there must be a misapprehension which cannot for the moment be cleared up. In any event, General Ludendorff stands fast to his point of view and asked that the passage be submitted to your Excellency in this form

With regard to point 3. What is meant is war indemnification on the part of England for the surrender of Belgium

With regard to point 4. It was impossible to find Longueville on the map. Therefore, Longwy was put down. By the adjustment of boundaries in Alsace Lorraine is meant the setting back of the boundary to the western mountain slope

General Ludendorff requests Your Excellency to have telegrams of this kind sent through me, since they pass through too many hands in the General Staff and he cannot undertake to guarantee that they will be given the appropriate secrecy. Aside from the above, I request Your Excellency to make use of me in this connection, as I am always placed in a very embarrassing position with regard to the General Staff if I receive my first notification of events of the utmost importance from this organisation.—GRUNAU<sup>1</sup>

### *German Initiative for a Negotiated Peace*

The German Supreme Command never erred through lack of optimism. As the war dragged on, they thought they could negotiate a peace that would leave Germany with the conquests already achieved. If we compare the war aims contained in the telegram quoted above with the idea that they might be achieved, even partially, by negotiation with the Allies, we shall be driven to the conclusion that the German High Command certainly possessed more military ability than political judgment.

Ludendorff in his Memoirs relates that towards the end of 1916 the High Command took the initiative in suggesting to the Government that they should make an appeal to

<sup>1</sup> (Page 1060, *Official German Documents relating to the World War*, Vol. 11). Published by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

the Entente. To this end, Field-Marshal von Hindenburg submitted to the Kaiser a report stating that :

“ The military situation is such that the political leaders of the Reich may make a peace offer if

- 1 The operations on land and the U-boat war at sea are continued without relaxation
- 2 An Army order expressing this is issued,
- 3 The political leaders of the Reich aim at bringing about the peace that Germany needs

As regards 1 (a) Continuation of operations as far as the Sereth  
(b) Then keeping troops in readiness against Denmark and Holland, and beginning of ruthless U-boat war at end of January

“ His Majesty, as Supreme War Lord, is requested that the Supreme Command may get into touch with the political leaders of the Reich on this basis ”<sup>1</sup>.

This occurred several days before the Peace Note was issued by the Central Powers to the Allies and eight months before the peace manoeuvre that the Reichstag was to undertake under Erzberger's leadership.

The Supreme Command also had to take into account the feeling in Germany, where the people were beginning to grow tired of the war, which seemed no longer either “ fresh ” or “ joyous.” To gauge this psychological change, it is sufficient to cite the evolution of Friedrich Naumann, who in 1915 was the champion of “ Mitteleuropa,” but who in August 1916, in his paper *die Hilfe*, wrote as follows :

“ When the war began, everybody was convinced that now we must fight, for how could we let other peoples tear us to pieces? At that time everybody understood that this was a case of necessity just as if we were threatened by a flood or a fire. But to-day many people no longer really understand why we are still fighting. And there is another thing. Owing to the fact that we have been somewhat vigorous in hailing and celebrating our victories, many people who are weak in arithmetic have lost all sense of the fact that there are still important Russian, British, French and Italian forces in existence. Thus because, after two years, the very greatest efforts have still to be made, it is as though we had been cheated of our bargain. People can no longer believe that the present battles are inevitable battles of defence. They have the gloomy suspicion that a policy of conquest, over and above what is necessary, is being pursued . . . ”

Did the Supreme Command itself already have certain apprehensions? Probably so, for on September 27, 1916, Field-Marshal von Hindenburg wrote to the Imperial

<sup>1</sup> From *Urkunden der Obersten Heeresleitung*, p 310. Documents for Report to be submitted to H.M. the Kaiser, dated December 8, 1916.

Chancellor<sup>1</sup> on the growing needs of the munitions industry and on the labour problem, as follows :

"I beg Your Excellency most urgently to impress upon all Federal Governments, administrative and communal authorities, the seriousness of the situation and to demand that they shall use every means to provide sufficient nourishment for our munition workers and unite all the leading men of all parties as leaders of the Army at home behind the plough and the lathe, to work together and arouse the *Furor Teutonicus* among the tillers of the soil as well as among the townspeople and munition workers "

Professor Meinecke at the end of 1916,<sup>2</sup> admitted that the Verdun offensive had been launched by the Germans in order "to prove to the French that they could no longer win the war and that they would do better to end a war which had lost all prospects for them." But the battle, like the Battle of the Somme, brought nothing decisive for Germany.

Subsequently, on December 12, 1916, the Kaiser, wishing to turn to account the territorial advantages which German strategy had meanwhile secured to his country, made the following announcement in an Order of the Day addressed to the Army and Navy :

"Under the impression of the victories you have achieved by your bravery, I and the Monarchs of the three Allied countries have made a peace offer to the enemy. It is uncertain whether the object of this offer will be achieved. Meanwhile, you will continue to resist the enemy and defeat him."

On the same day the Chancellor informed the Reichstag that Germany and her satellites—Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey—had transmitted to their enemies the following diplomatic Note, whose contents reflected the Germans' notorious lack of psychological sense :

"The most formidable war ever known to history has been devastating for two and a half years a considerable part of the world. This catastrophe, which the bonds of a common civilisation of more than 1,000 years could not prevent, strikes mankind in its most precious heritage ; it threatens to bury under its ruins the moral and physical progress of which Europe was so proud at the dawn of the 20th century. In this struggle Germany and her Allies, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, have given proof of their indestructible strength by winning considerable successes in a war against opponents superior in numbers and equipment. Their unshakable lines resist ceaseless enemy attacks.

<sup>1</sup> This was not published in Germany until two months later. Cf " *The Times* " *History of the War*, Vol. XI, p. 475.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Frankfurter Zeitung*, December 31, 1916.

The recent diversion in the Balkans was speedily and victoriously thwarted. The latest events have demonstrated that a continuation of the war cannot break their power of resistance (on the contrary). The general situation justifies their hope of fresh successes. It was for the defence of their existence and their national development that the four Allied Powers were constrained to take up arms. The exploits of their armies have brought no change. Not for one instant have they swerved from the conviction that the respect of the rights of other nations is not in any degree incompatible with their own rights and legitimate interests.

"They do not seek to crush or annihilate their adversaries. Conscious of their military and economic strength and ready to carry on to the end, if they must, the struggle that is imposed upon them, but animated at the same time by the desire to stem the flow of blood and to bring the horrors of war to an end, the four Allied Powers now propose to enter into peace negotiations. They feel sure that the proposals which they would bring forward, and which would aim to assure the existence, honour and free development of their peoples, would be such as to serve as a basis for the restoration of a lasting peace.

"If, notwithstanding this offer of peace and conciliation, the struggle should continue, the four Allied Powers are resolved to carry it on to a victorious end, while solemnly disclaiming any responsibility before mankind and history."

This document was also sent to the Vatican, accompanied by a German appeal to the Pope who, it said :

"since the first day of his Pontifical reign has unswervingly demonstrated in a most generous fashion his solicitude for the innumerable victims of this war, has alleviated the sufferings and ameliorated the fate of thousands of men injured by this catastrophe . . ."

The Allies immediately saw the trap that was being set by the German Government, which held as hostages Serbia, Rumania, Belgium and part of France. Their answer was a blunt refusal. Mr Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister,<sup>1</sup> quoted in the House of Commons the famous words of Abraham Lincoln :

"We accepted this war for an object and a worthy object and the war will end when that object is attained."

However, President Wilson, by agreement with Holland, Spain and Switzerland, sent a long Note, dated the 20th, to Britain, advising in a friendly tone that the war should be ended. No doubt, he saw the coming of the American-German war in consequence of the U-boat war and was seeking a solution that would save his country from that possibility.

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister from December 7, 1915.

The American *demarche* was eagerly imitated by the other neutrals — Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

While the German Government welcomed the "high-minded suggestion" of the American President, which it had examined "in a friendly spirit," and declared its readiness to meet the enemy Powers immediately in a neutral place, the Entente Powers, in a joint Note handed to the American Ambassador in Paris on December 20, refused.

The Note was as follows :

"The Allied Governments of Russia, France, Great Britain, Japan, Italy, Serbia, Belgium, Montenegro, Portugal and Rumania, united for the defence of the freedom of nations and faithful to their undertakings not to lay down their arms except in common accord, have decided to return a joint answer to the illusory peace proposals which have been addressed to them by the Governments of the enemy Powers through the intermediary of the United States, Spain, Switzerland and the Netherlands

"As a prelude to any reply, the Allied Powers feel bound to protest strongly against the two material assertions made in the Note from the enemy Powers, the one professing to throw upon the Allies the responsibility of the war, and the other proclaiming the victory of the Central Powers

"The Allies cannot admit a claim which is thus untrue in each particular and is sufficient alone to render sterile all attempt at negotiations

"The Allied nations have for thirty months been engaged in a war which they had done everything to avoid. They have shown by their actions their devotion to peace. This devotion is as strong to-day as it was in 1914, and after the violation by Germany of her solemn engagements, Germany's promise is no sufficient foundation on which to re-establish the peace which she broke

"A mere suggestion, without statement of terms, that negotiations should be opened, is not an offer of peace. The putting forward by the Imperial Government of a sham proposal, lacking all substance and precision, would appear to be less an offer of peace than a war manoeuvre

"It is founded on a calculated misinterpretation of the character of the struggle in the past, the present and the future. . . ."

The Allies then recalled how, at the so-called Peace Conferences at The Hague in 1899 and 1907, the German delegation had refused the disarmament proposals. In July 1914, after the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia, Germany did not even reply to the proposals made *in extremis* to save the peace—that of Great Britain to call a

conference, that of France to convoke an international commission, that of the Tsar to arbitrate. As to the present, the war map presented only a transient picture that did not reflect the respective strength of the belligerents. As to the future, the extortions committed by Germany demanded punishment, reparations and guarantees. The Note concluded by recalling that Belgium, which had always scrupulously satisfied her international obligations, expected that Right should be restored.

The Allied refusal evoked a wave of *furor teutonicus* in the German papers, which outbid each other in invective. On January 11, Germany sent a second Note to the United States and the other neutral countries, emphasising that this time history must judge as to the origin of the war. Germany and her Allies "who were compelled to take up arms to defend their freedom" now regarded this aim as attained. "Our enemies," said the German Note, "in whose power it was to examine the real value of our offer, neither made any examination nor made counter-proposals."

That was not all; the Note also made an insolent attack on Belgium for not allowing a free passage to the German armies, denounced the malice that carried the war as far as Africa, and protested against the economic war being conducted against Germany.

It is interesting to remember that the Note contained two slogans that were to play a most important role later, under the Weimar Republic: on the one hand, Germany's innocence of the war, and on the other, the "starvation campaign against Germany."

These German protests and outbursts produced little or no effect on the Entente countries. But they obliged them to send another Note<sup>1</sup> to the American Ambassador in Paris, Mr Sharp, in which they defined their own war aims. While criticising the intervention of President Wilson, who seemed to assume "a likeness between the two belligerent groups," whereas such comparison conflicted "directly with the evidence, both as regards responsibility for the past and the guarantees for the future," the Note

<sup>1</sup> Signed by Mr Briand, dated January 10, 1917

recalled the aggressive will of Germany and Austria.<sup>1</sup> As to war aims, the Allies defined them again :

" . . . restoration of Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro, with the compensation due to them ; the evacuation of the territories in France, in Russia, in Rumania, with just reparation, the reorganisation of Europe, guaranteed by a stable régime and based at once on respect for nationalities and on the right for full security and liberty of economic development possessed by all peoples small and great, and at the same time upon territorial conventions and international settlements such as to guarantee land and sea frontiers against unjustified attack ; the restitution of provinces formerly torn from the Allies by force or against the wish of their inhabitants ; the liberation of the Italians, as also of the Slavs, Rumanians, and Czecho-Slovaks from foreign domination : the setting free of the populations subject to the bloody tyranny of the Turks : and the turning out of Europe of the Ottoman Empire as decidedly foreign to Western civilisation "

A few days after the Allied refusal, the Kaiser, putting a good face on it, issued a manifesto *An Mein Heer und meine Marine* (*To My Army and Navy*) whose resources now had to be strained to the utmost on a now or never basis :

" Jointly with the Allied rulers I proposed to our enemies to enter into peace negotiations at an early date. Our enemies have rejected my proposal. Their lust for power demands the annihilation of Germany. The war is taking its course.

" Before God and humanity, the heavy responsibility for all the further terrible sacrifices that my will tried to spare you, falls upon the enemy Governments alone. In your just indignation over the presumptuous wickedness of the enemy, in the will to defend our most glorious possessions and secure a happy future for the Fatherland, you will turn to steel. Our enemies did not want the understanding offered by me. With God's help, our arms will force them to do so.

General Headquarters, January 5, 1917.

Wilhelm, I.R."

In a word, *Mein Heer und Meine Marine* were requested to win *Mein Kampf*.

### *Unrestricted Submarine War*

The die was cast. Germany had to make up her mind to carry on the war to the end. This meant final victory for the protagonists of unrestricted submarine war. At

<sup>1</sup> The Note stressed the horrors that accompanied the invasion of Belgium and Serbia, the atrocious rule laid upon the invaded countries, the massacres of hundreds of thousands of inoffensive Armenians, the barbarities committed against the inhabitants of Syria, the Zeppelin raids upon towns, the destruction of passenger steamers and merchantmen by submarines, the deportation and enslavement of civilians, etc.

the beginning of 1917, the Supreme Command had sent an Order of the Day to the officers on the Western Front,<sup>1</sup> predicting the end of the war within the next six months as a result of the destruction of a sufficient amount of tonnage to compel Britain to sue for peace.

On January 31, the Reich Government circulated a Note among the neutral Powers notifying them of the extension of the blockade to the vast regions round the Allied countries, where neutral merchant ships could thenceforth venture only under the menace of being torpedoed without warning by German submarines.<sup>2</sup>

Two days later the United States severed relations with Germany. Ambassador Gerard was recalled from Berlin, and Count Bernstorff was handed his passport in Washington.

On February 20, the new British Blockade Order was published. While the U-boat war, though an extremely serious matter for Britain, failed to "bring her to her knees" as the German Admiralty had hoped, her own blockade was making itself increasingly felt in Germany. Britain was making thorough preparations for a long war; on February 16, the lists for the Great War Loan issue were closed, £1,000,312,950 of new money having been raised. Germany was no longer careful about the neutrals: on February 22, 1917, seven Dutch ships were torpedoed by German U-boats outside Falmouth, three of them being sunk.

### *Reichstag Debate on Peace Aims*

Bethmann-Hollweg, in the course of the Reichstag debate of February 27, 1917, reverted to the question of war aims:

"What I am able to say concerning the direction and aim of our terms, I have already said repeatedly. To put an end to the war with a durable peace that will compensate us for all the wrongs we have suffered and will safeguard the existence and future of a strong Germany—that is our aim."

<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed in Erzberger's *Erinnerungen*, p. 251 and p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> In this connection, Heir H. Delbrueck, Professor of History and a Minister, in February, 1917, wrote in the Prussian *Jahrbuecher*: "I should have welcomed it with all my heart if the peace offer had led to peace negotiations, because I am of the opinion that in view of the present war situation we should have been in a position to achieve all that is necessary for Germany. But now we may as well welcome the tremendous impetus that our will for war has received, and also the uncertainty and confusion we have provoked among our enemies."



He went on :

"My last speech before the assembled Reichstag on December 12, 1916, concerned the proposal of Germany and her Allies to enter into peace negotiations. Our action found a lively echo in the neutral countries. But in the enemy countries the stubborn war lust of their rulers was stronger than the cry of the nations for peace. Our enemies alone bear the enormous guilt for the continued bloodshed. It was they who rejected the hand of understanding.

"Of the sea blockade imposed by us jointly with Austria-Hungary on Britain, France and Italy, I spoke on January 31 before your Main Committee. To the Note announcing the blockade which was published at the time, we have received from the neutrals replies with reservations and protests. We are by no means unaware of the great difficulties with which neutral shipping has become confronted, and are trying to mitigate them as far as possible. But we also know that these difficulties are ultimately due only to Britain's brutal sea tyranny. It is this enslavement by Britain of all non-British sea traffic that we want to and will break. The freedom of the sea, for which we are fighting, will also be of benefit to the neutral countries.

"On receipt of our Note of January 31, President Wilson roughly severed diplomatic relations with us. The severance of relations with us and the effort to mobilise all the neutrals against us is not calculated to serve the defence of the freedom of the seas proclaimed by the United States Government. It does not promote the peace for which President Wilson is also striving, but must instead lead to the encouragement of Britain's hunger policy and to the multiplication of the bloodshed."

The Chancellor concluded as follows :

"Britain seems to realise the menace of the U-boat war. . . Thanks to the incomparable gallantry of our U-boats, we are fully justified in viewing the further development of the sea war and its effects on the war potential of our enemies with every confidence. . ."

And what did Socialist Ebert say ?

"... Through their refusal of the peace negotiations offered by Germany and her Allies, the enemy Powers have taken the grave responsibility for the continuation of the war on their own shoulders. They want to carry through their aims of conquest, which have now been expressed without concealment, and which would involve the permanent subjection of the Central Powers. In view of this state of affairs, German Social Democracy again declares its determination to hold out until a peace that will safeguard the vital interests of the German people is achieved. . .

My political friends have never regarded the granting of the war credits as a question of confidence or lack of confidence in the Reich Government, we have granted the war credits because we regard this as a duty to our country and our people. I refuse, at this moment, to enter into a discussion on war aims."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reichstag speech, February 23, 1917. See Friedrich Ebert, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp 362-363

*The U.S. A. Joins the Allies. Revolution in Russia*

On April 6, the U.S.A. declared war on Germany.

On the other hand, the German U-boat war had attained its peak. April 1917 was the record month of the war, with sinkings amounting to 880,000 tons. This circumstance may explain the one-sided optimism of some German military leaders, who, despite a "memorandum of warning" issued by Count Czernin and other warning signals, spoke of a victorious conclusion of the war by the autumn of 1917!<sup>1</sup>

Moreover the Russian Revolution caused the Germans to believe that the conclusion of a favourable peace in the East was more than probable. The Central Executive of the German Socialists who sought to stop hostilities in the West as well, where the United States was about to put in its wealth and manpower, on April 20 passed the following resolution :

"We welcome with passionate sympathy the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the revival of international peace efforts fostered thereby. We declare our agreement with the Resolution of the Congress of Russian Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets to prepare a joint peace without annexations and war indemnities on the basis of the free national development of all nations. We therefore consider it as the most important duty of the German Social Democratic Party, as well as of the Socialists of all other countries, to combat dreams of power, of ambitious chauvinism, press their Governments to an express renunciation of any policy of conquest, and bring about decisive peace negotiations on this basis as soon as possible."

*Beginning of War-weariness*

This conciliatory attitude of the Majority Socialists may be, perhaps, explained by growing war-weariness among the German civilian population, which suffered severe privations because of the food shortage caused by

<sup>1</sup> Count Bernstorff, former Ambassador in Washington, reports the following on his interview with General Ludendorff on May 4, 1917. "Gen. Ludendorff received me with the words: 'You wanted to make peace in America. I suppose you thought we were finished.' To which I replied: 'No, I do not think we are already finished. But I wanted to make peace before we got finished.' To which Gen. Ludendorff replied: 'Yes, but we did not want to do so. Now, through the U-boat war, we shall finish the affair in three months.' I then asked whether he was certain he could finish the war in three months. He replied that a few hours earlier he had received definite news that England could in no circumstances bear the war longer than three months, owing to lack of food." (Statement made before the Reichstag Committee of Investigation (Sub-Committee No. 2) on October 23, 1919.)

the Allied blockade. It should be recalled that in April 1917 the rapidly deteriorating food situation had given rise to a strike of about 200,000 Berlin workers. The strike lasted several days and came to an end only when the strikers were promised by the authorities that their bread, meat and potato rations would be increased in the immediate future. Similar strikes, in general due to purely economic causes, occurred in Halle, Brunswick, Leipzig and Magdeburg. In Leipzig, the Independent Socialist stronghold, the strikers put forward a number of demands: the issue of sufficient supplies of cheap provisions and coal to the public; a declaration by the Imperial Government that it was prepared to conclude peace immediately and that it renounced all open or secret plans for annexations; abolition of censorship and martial law; labour legislation, etc.

### *War Aims as Counter-measure*

On the other hand, desertions from the Army began on a considerable scale. The German ruling class was frightened by these developments and decided to counteract them by exalting the war spirit through appropriate propaganda for war aims. The Conservative Deputy Arnstaedt, together with about fifty other Reichstag members,<sup>1</sup> demanded that the Chancellor should clearly define Germany's war aims. One of their mouthpieces, Dr Roesicke, said in the Reichstag:

"We consider the Resolution of the Social Democratic Party as so utterly fatal for the German people because it represents not national, but international, not to say anti-national interests. The Social Democratic Party demands an early peace. Who of us does not desire an early peace? But we do not believe that an early peace can be brought about along the path they have taken. . . . They want an international peace, we want a national peace. The Social Democratic Party declares that it wants independence and free economic development for the German people. How do they propose to achieve this without an extension of power?

"They declare that they do not want any conquests. Who wants a war of conquest? None of us. But we do want to draw a moral from this war. We are waging a defensive war, we want to make ourselves secure for the future. . . . I ask you: How can we secure our future defence without an extension of power? We need an extension of power

<sup>1</sup> Including Herr von Graefe-Guestrow, Dr von Heydebrand, zu Puttltz, Dr Roesicke, Count von Schwerin, Count von Westarp, Herr von Winterfeld

to strengthen our ethnical forces, we need it the better to secure for Germany the ability to feed herself independently, we need it for Germany's economic future. We need it, above all else, for the purpose of defensive rearmament without which we might at any moment in the future be confronted defenceless with an equally ruthless war.

"Do you think that an enemy who has not been floored would concede us trade agreements securing permanent advantages for us and permanent disadvantages for himself? . . .

"The man who has the absolute confidence of us all, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, has said that we are in a definitely strong military position both in the East and the West. He further declares that the U-boat war is completely fulfilling that which is intended, and indeed that it will continue on its victorious course. And from the economic point of view all the reports go to show that our enemies are always faring worse than we. In face of this I and my political friends are of the opinion that we have only one duty, and that is the duty to reject an international peace and demand a national peace.

"Rejection of a peace of renunciation, and a clearly expressed determination to achieve a peace that will satisfy the national requirements, the safeguarding of the German future, the safeguarding of the German defence against reckless attacks like the present—that is an aim that is heartening and steeling our warriors in the field, and the pre-requisite of the attainment of this aim is the extension of Germany's power and territory and the collection of an indemnity not only for the wrong inflicted on us or for the misery that the war has brought to us, but also for the direct expenditure demanded by the war.

"The nation, deeply concerned about its future, demands a clear answer from the Chancellor . . ."

It was now that the gulf between the Militarists on the one hand, and the Left on the other, began to widen. Scheidemann blamed the methods employed by the other side. He criticised their "clumsiness," the "brutality" with which they were playing their game. However, it was not so much a difference of principles, as one of tactics, not a matter of convictions, but a question of comparative cunning. Here is what he said :

"As compared with certain allegations that have been made . . . one must almost admire the subtle diplomacy of the Entente Note to Wilson. That, too, was a program of conquest, but . . . but it spoke of freedom, the happiness of nations, self-determination, etc. Our politicians of conquest cry : We must have this, we need that—we, and we don't give a damn for other peoples. Owing to this Pan-German bull-in-the-china-shop policy we have come under the truly crazy suspicion that we are a robber nation, a nationally organised robber band of 70 millions, so to speak. And this despite the fact that we are only defending our bare existence, whereas the other nations went to war, as we know, in order to satisfy their imperialistic requirements."

Scheidemann again :

I want to be quite frank if the British and French Governments were to-day to renounce annexations, as the Russian Government has already done, and if the German Government, instead of ending the war through a similar renunciation, wanted to continue it for the sake of conquest, then Gentlemen—you may rely upon it that there would be a revolution in the country.

" Let us make a peace based on the free will of all the countries concerned, not on the triumphant will of one side and the broken will of the other. No territorial changes without free consent, no annexations, no imposition of debt-bondage by one nation upon another.

" I once said that it would be incomprehensible if anyone imagined that the world could be in flames for years, without a single boundary stone being displaced. I still believe that. I am firmly convinced that it is impossible for this war to end without a single boundary stake being moved. What matters is that the displacement of boundary stakes should be effected by mutual agreement, that no country should be violated in the process. . . . Not violation, but understanding. Long live peace ! Long live free Europe ! "

Dr Spahn, representative of the Catholic Centre, made the following statement on behalf of his own Party (ninety-one members), the Progressive Party (forty-five), the National Liberals (forty-five) and the majority of the " Deutsche Fraktion " :<sup>1</sup>

" We are agreed in the view that the present Reichstag discussions on the peace aims of the German Reich do not serve the properly conceived interests of our Fatherland.

" The German people's longing for peace is directed towards a peace that will safeguard the German nation's existence, its position as a political and economic world power and its freedom of development, and will permanently frustrate the isolation of the Reich from the world market attempted by Britain. None but a will pointing to this peace aim must therefore rely on the confidence of the German people.

" The Reich Chancellor in his previous speeches has defined his aims. We agree with him if he refuses in the present circumstances to reveal details of these war aims to the enemy. For us it is sufficient if the leaders of the Reich will neither pursue plans of unlimited conquest, nor commit themselves to the idea of a peace without annexations and war indemnities.

" The hatred of our enemies is directed under the pretext that they are combating Prussian militarism, against the Hohenzollern throne. . . . The German people stands unwaveringly behind the Kaiser and the Reich. It decidedly rejects any interference in its internal affairs."

<sup>1</sup> See footnote, page 116.

It was now the Chancellor's turn. He wanted it clearly understood that the German Reich had "no conquests in view." He said:

"If Russia wants to keep further bloodshed away from her sons, if she renounces all plans of forcible conquest on her part, if she wants to live in permanent friendship with us—then it is only self-understood that we, who share this desire, will not destroy the permanent relationship of the future, will not render it impossible through demands that are incompatible with the freedom and will of the peoples themselves, and that would only implant in the Russian people the germ of fresh enmity. I have no doubt that it would be possible to find an agreement based exclusively on an honest mutual understanding that would leave no sting and no ill feeling."

Bethmann-Hollweg then added with satisfaction:

"Our military position is better than it has probably ever been since the beginning of the war. Time is on our side. We are entitled to be fully confident that we are nearing a favourable outcome. Then the time will come when we shall be able to discuss with our enemies our peace aims, with regard to which I am in full agreement with the Supreme Command. Then we shall achieve a peace that will leave us free to rebuild what this war has destroyed through the unimpeded development of our forces . . ."

Socialist Dr David hit the nail on the head as regards the real thoughts of his Party:

"The aims of conquest put forward by the Reich are unrealisable, and adherence to such extravagant war aims is evidence of a complete over-estimation of what can be done by force."

Ledebour, of the Independent Socialist group,<sup>1</sup> pointed out the immense gulf separating the few independent members from the representatives of German Socialism, who for over three years had been making common cause with the Supreme Command. As he bitterly commented:

"The whole struggle between us and these gentlemen,<sup>2</sup> essentially turned on the demand made by us from the outset that the Reich Government should declare its adherence to a peace without annexations. Our demand was always refused, and the last processes, which finally led to the split in the party in December, 1915, at first turned precisely on this question: Should the Chancellor be asked whether he would offer peace without annexations or not? . . . But Herr Scheidemann, despite the fact that he and his friends, just like ourselves, could not have entertained the slightest uncertainty that the Chancellor in his heart was planning an annexationist peace, continually tried to cover

<sup>1</sup> The Independent Socialist Party was founded at Gotha in the middle of April 1917, under the leadership of Haase and Ledebour, with fifteen other members of the Reichstag.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.*, the Majority Socialists.

the Chancellor and the Reich Government, making public speeches designed to mislead the people as to the plans of the Reich Government "

That was how a new phase of the Parliamentary debate on German war aims during the world war ended.

### *The Growing Strength of the Coalition*

On June 25, the first American units arrived in France. The coalition that was now confronting Germany comprised : Belgium, France, Great Britain, the United States, Italy, Japan, China, Greece, Portugal, Rumania, Serbia and Siam. In Latin America, several States had either declared war on Germany or severed diplomatic relations with her.<sup>1</sup>

### *The War Aims of the German Admiralty*

Nevertheless, the German naval and military leaders were still full of optimism.

On May 18, 1917, the Chief of the German Corps of Admirals submitted a strictly confidential memorandum to the Kaiser on the acquisition of strategic bases. The memorandum ran as follows :

" If, as we hope, the idea of a Central African colonial empire can be realised at the conclusion of peace, the task will impose itself to acquire at the same time the bases required to hold this colonial empire in a future war, and to equip them for a trade war and trade protection. An examination of this question has shown that in addition to the ports of the prospective African colonial empire, the following bases would best answer our purpose :

" 1. In the Atlantic Ocean : the Azores or a part thereof, and Dakar with an adequate hinterland. The acquisition of Dakar and Senegambia is in the interests of the Army also, for this will enable it to prevent, through military pressure on the spot, the recruitment of black troops in the French territories in Central Africa.

" 2. In the Mediterranean the Colonial Office does not propose to acquire any colonial territory of our own. However, a German Mediterranean base is indispensable for the conduct of any naval war. The most desirable base would be Valona, which would either have to become German or be leased from a friendly Power, into whose possession it might come. Valona from the strategical point of view is extremely favourably situated, is easy to defend, and may be linked with the homeland by rail through friendly territory.

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the Argentine Republic, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Venezuela.

‘ Should it prove to be impossible to acquire Valona, we must content ourselves with the obtaining of concessions from our Allies for the permanent use of Cattaro and Alexandretta. Islands need not be considered because an overland link with the base is indispensable, Valona under the German flag might do as the only base in the Mediterranean. However, the uncertainty of future political developments compels us—if we must rely on the hospitality of an Ally—to make provision for more than one possibility.

“ 3 The question of bases in the Indian Ocean depends on whether we shall retain German East Africa or not. In addition to the East African ports naval warfare demands a radio base in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese part of Timor would be suitable.

“ Without the East African ports, we require a second radio base in the Western part of the Indian Ocean (*e.g.* Reunion).

“ 4. In the Pacific Ocean both the Reich Colonial Office and the Naval Command attach importance to the retention of New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago. The Reich Colonial Office further recommends the acquisition of New Caledonia, for the sake of its nickel and cobalt deposits. No other territorial possessions in the Pacific Ocean, except for radio bases, are required either from the point of view of the Naval Command or from that of the Colonial Office. As radio bases the Island of Jap, in addition to New Guinea in the Western part and Tahiti in the Eastern part, is eligible.”

“ In China we may dispense with military bases altogether if the peace treaties ensure that Germany should receive further concessions like the existing trade settlements (Tientsin, Hankow). In such a concession a building with a repair shop must be erected and a crude coal dump established. Desirable locations would be Tsingtau, Wahn on the Yang-Tse-Kiang and a place in South China to be selected purely in accordance with trading interests.

“ I have already been in touch with the Reich Colonial Office and have established that, in general, the wishes of the Naval Command and those of the Reich Colonial Office coincide.

“ I humbly pray Your Majesty for permission, in principle, to proceed on the basis of the plan outlined above in the preparatory work for the conclusion of peace.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *Die Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs im Jahre 1918*, part. 1, Vol. 12, 1929, pp. 209-210.



### CHAPTER III

## “PEACE WITHOUT ANNEXATIONS AND INDEMNITIES ”

### *A New Slogan*

As already mentioned, the Majority Socialist Party in its proclamation of April 20, 1917, advanced a new idea in Germany—that of peace without annexations and indemnities. This idea was never mentioned in 1914, 1915 or 1916. It did not come until the war had become drawn out beyond German calculations, until the Western Front had become stabilised, until the United States had come in on the side of the Allies, and until the Allied blockade had caused discontent and war-weariness among the civilian population—it needed all this to move the Socialists to make a public declaration disassociating themselves from the idea of territorial annexations and advocating a “white” peace. In 1914, such a declaration might have helped to stop the bloodshed. In 1917 it came too late. The situation had meanwhile undergone a complete change. The right of the peoples to self-determination had been proclaimed by President Wilson and had raised new hopes in the hearts of the nationalities subjugated by the Central Powers. The people of Alsace-Lorraine wanted to return to France, the Poles wanted an independent and united Poland (their aspirations having been reinforced by the Russian Provisional Government’s recognition of Poland’s right to independence), the Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes, the Italians of Trieste, the Rumanians of Transylvania—all these wanted to shake off the Austro-Hungarian yoke. This powerful movement of the oppressed nationalities of Central Europe and the Danube Basin was viewed with increasing sympathy by the Allies. They could be liberated only at the expense of the Central Powers. Thus the idea of a peace without annexations in 1917 meant simply this, that the structure of the Central European Empires was to remain intact and that the subjugated nationalities of Europe were to remain the

slaves of their German, Austrian and Hungarian masters. This idea, which would have promoted peace in 1914, had become a reactionary idea in 1917.

However, the same Germans who proclaimed it for the benefit of the Central Powers, did not hesitate to favour the contrary privilege of national self-determination in the East. When it came to dismembering a Russian Empire weakened by war and revolution, they demanded independence for Finland, Poland (to be composed, of course, only of the provinces which belonged to the Russians, without the provinces annexed in the eighteenth century by Prussia and Austria), the Ukraine, the Baltic countries, etc. But this independence was to be restricted by close political and economic control on the part of the Reich, which wanted to play the role of protecting Power in the East.

*The Stockholm Conference of Labour Leaders  
Attitude of the Majority Socialists*

In June 1917, at the initiative of M. Branting, the Swedish Socialist leader, an International Socialist Labour Conference took place at Stockholm. The French and British Governments saw scope for a German manoeuvre in the Conference and refused visas to the delegates from their respective countries. However, it was attended by Socialists from neutral countries and by German and Austrian Socialists. The Majority Socialists' delegation was headed by Scheidemann and Ebert, and included Dr David, Hermann Mueller, Legien, Molkenbuhr, Sassenbach, G. Bauer and R. Fischer. The Conference was also attended by a Delegation of Independent Socialists, composed of Ed. Bernstein, K. Kautsky, Ledebour, Stadhagen, Hofer, Wengels and Cohn.

Let us see what the Majority Socialists had to say to their foreign colleagues on behalf of those who had not hesitated to vote for the war loans. In a memorandum dated June 12, which they submitted to the Conference, they wrote :

“ 1 Annexations

“ We are opposed to any forcible annexation. Where frontiers are changed as a result of mutual agreement, it is important to guarantee to people who desire to retain their old political allegiance the legal and economic possibility of settling down in their new homes

" The rejection of forced annexations clearly implies the restoration of the colonies which have been taken from us.

". . . 2 Restoration.

" In so far as this question means political restoration, that is to say, the re-establishment of the independence of a distinctive State, our answer is in the affirmative.

" On the other hand, we oppose a one-sided obligation to restore the devastated districts affected by the war. This damage has been done in all the theatres of war by friend as well as foe, during advances and retreats, partly as a result of actual fighting, partly as a result of immediate measures taken in the interest of military security. It seems to us to be extraordinarily difficult to determine the origin of these acts of destruction and to estimate their military justification. A one-sided obligation to pay for damage would be nothing less than a masked war indemnity.

" As to the countries which have been ruined by the war and are incapable of reconstructing their economic life out of their own resources, we envisage the possibility of international financial assistance on a mutually agreed basis.

". . . 3 The Right of Nations to free Self-Determination

" We understand by the right of peoples to free self-determination the right of peoples to retain or recover their political independence.

" The States to be considered in the first place are those which, like Belgium, Serbia, and other Balkan countries, have lost their independence during the war.

" We are in favour of the re-establishment of the independence of Belgium. Belgium should not be a vassal State either of Germany or England or France.

" As regards Serbia and the other Balkan States, we are of the same opinion as our Austrian comrades.

" The second group of nations whose right to self-determination has to be taken into account are those which had formerly lost their independence, but have been liberated from foreign domination by the events of this war. This applies, for example, to Russian Poland (Congress Poland) and Finland. We cannot refuse to these peoples the right of self-determination. The others, in so far as they cannot be granted political independence, should at least be granted autonomy, so as to enable them to develop their own national life.

" The third group consists of highly civilised peoples who were formerly independent, but have become the victims of imperialist domination, and whose political circumstances have not been changed by the war. The following belong to this category: Ireland, Egypt, Tripoli, Morocco, India, Thibet, Korea, and other countries which have known an independent political life.

" German Social Democracy greets with the greatest sympathy the efforts of those peoples who desire to reconquer their national liberty, and would be gratified to see the Socialists of the ruling countries raise their voices on behalf of the nations demanding to be freed from foreign domination.

" . . 4. Autonomy for Nationalities

" In so far as these words mean cultural autonomy for populations speaking a foreign language and forming an entity within a larger State, German Social Democracy, in agreement with the policy which it has hitherto followed, will continue to demand the widest possible application of this principle. In the case of the German Empire, it would apply to the claims of our fellow citizens in Northern Schleswig, Posen, and Western Prussia, likewise Alsace-Lorraine, districts where the mother tongue is Danish, Polish, or French. We expressly condemn any measures that would hinder these citizens in the use of the mother tongue, and any attack on their national customs. These groups of people of the same nationality living within another State ought not to be an obstacle to mutual amicable relations, but, on the contrary, should serve as bridges between two peoples and two civilisations. The extension of the principle of democracy in all countries would bring us nearer to this goal.

" As regards the position of the different nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian State, here also we agree with the declaration of our Austrian comrades.<sup>1</sup>

" . . . 5. Alsace-Lorraine

" In its questionnaire the Committee has put Alsace-Lorraine under the heading of nationalities. It must be said that Alsace-Lorraine has never been a politically independent State, nor can it be considered as a particular nationality. Nearly nine-tenths of the population of Alsace-Lorraine are of German nationality, whether from the point of view of race, language, or descent. Scarcely 11.4 per cent speak French as their mother tongue.

" Nor is Alsace-Lorraine one of those territories which have changed hands in the course of the war. Apart from one small strip, it has remained in the hands of the German Government. Neither, therefore, can any discussion of its political independence be justified from that point of view.

" The territories of Alsace-Lorraine which formerly belonged to Germany both ethnologically and politically, were forcibly taken away from her by France. By the peace of Frankfurt in 1871, these provinces again became part of the country of which they had formed a part in earlier times. It is, therefore, quite unjust to speak of the historic right of France. For Alsace-Lorraine to be returned to France by force would be nothing less than annexation, and, what is more, an annexation of territory where a large proportion of the population speak a foreign language. We must, therefore, oppose this solution in conformity with the principle of peace without annexations.

" German Social Democracy claims for the people of Alsace-Lorraine complete equality as an independent federated State within the German Empire, as well as the right to develop its local legislation and administration on liberal and democratic lines. This desire was last

<sup>1</sup> At Stockholm the Austrian Socialists declared that they accepted only the principle of autonomy (self-government) for the various nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

expressed in a resolution adopted at the Congress of Vienna in 1913, a resolution proposed by our comrades from Alsace-Lorraine. Before the war, the French Socialists expressed their support of the settlement of the question of Alsace-Lorraine on the lines of such equality and the most complete local autonomy. It is a settlement which corresponds to the demands recently made by the deputies from Alsace-Lorraine, elected by universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage.

"The principle of peace without annexation naturally does not exclude friendly agreements regarding rectification of frontiers at any point whatever.

". . . II.—International Conventions

". . . 2 Disarmament and the Freedom of the Seas

"Conditions referring to the limitation of armaments on land and at sea must find a place in the peace treaties. The object of these arrangements would be the creation of citizen armies responsible for the defence of their country against aggressive attacks and oppression. The period of military service in the different categories of such armies ought to be limited as far as possible by international treaties.

". . . In the same way it will be important to limit by agreement the use of war weapons, nationalize the armaments industry, limit by international treaty the sale of armaments and munitions by neutral States to belligerent Powers, abolish the right of capture at sea, prohibit the arming of merchantmen, place under international control all straits and oceanic canals necessary for the world's traffic.

". . . There ought to be effective guarantees for the security of world trade during war.

"The 'Contraband' the memorandum concluded, 'should be defined internationally, and so as to exclude the raw materials of food and clothing. Private property ought to be secured against the encroachments of belligerents. Postal communication between belligerents and neutrals or between one neutral and another should be similarly assured in the event of war. Finally, the definition of blockade should be revised.' "

In this connection, Scheidemann upon his return to Berlin on July 5, 1917, made the following statement:

" . . . I am not willing in this connection to enquire whether the policy of German domination of the world would be favourable to the interests of the German people and of mankind. I am examining here only the purely practical side of the question and I may say here that no policy aiming at German domination in the world could have been worse than the policy which has been followed for the last thirty years. A policy aiming at German domination of the world would have had to do two things. It would have had to choose Germany's political opponent carefully and to have isolated him diplomatically. In order to defeat him, it ought to have gained sympathy for Germanism throughout the world, so that the peoples, or a substantial proportion of the peoples concerned would have seen in the increase of German strength an advantage to themselves also. I say this without implying that such a policy would have had our support, but it is sufficient for me to state that such a policy had not been followed."

These clever tactics were in fact adopted by Stresemann after the war in his policy of isolating Poland and Czechoslovakia.

*Attitude of the German Independent Socialists  
at Stockholm*

How far the Majority Socialists were from the war aims of the minority group. Let us glance at the Memorandum of the Independents, submitted to the Stockholm Conference by Reichstag Deputy Haase:

“Although we do not regard as inviolable State frontiers resulting from conquest, which are often inconsistent with the wishes of the people, we absolutely condemn war, and so, too, condemn its prolongation as a method of settling frontier questions. Any frontier changes ought to be conditional on the consent of the populations concerned, and not imposed by force. We strongly object to any attempt to violate a people in any form whatever

“From the beginning of the war we have consistently demanded peace without annexations or indemnities, based upon the right of peoples to dispose of themselves freely. We consider that it is impossible to reconcile with Socialist principles the opinion—a product of militarist thought and of the policy of national expansion—that one’s attitude towards a problem should depend upon the war map, and thus that one may pass a different judgment on one and the same question at different stages of the war

“. . . Serbia

“The restoration of Serbia as an independent autonomous State is absolutely essential. We do not deny that the desire of the Serbs for union in a single national State is justified. The creation of such a State, and its union with other Balkan States in a Republican Federation, would be the best way of establishing in the Balkans permanently satisfactory conditions, which would preclude foreign interference and remove the Eastern question as a cause of war. To seek for such a solution by war would mean a useless prolongation of the conflict

“. . . Poland

“We understand the deep aspiration of the Poles for national unity. The attitude which would allow the right of the Poles to national autonomy to be settled by the war map—admitting the right of the Russian Poles to national independence but refusing the same right to Prussian and Austrian Poles—is in contradiction with the right of free self-determination. But there too we oppose the continuation of the war as a means of making this right prevail.

“. . . Alsace-Lorraine

“In the same way we condemn this method of solving the question of Alsace-Lorraine, and here we are in agreement with Engels and Jaurès. A prolongation of the war on the question of Alsace-Lorraine now means

that the whole world, including Alsace-Lorraine, is to be ravaged because of the dispute which has arisen with regard to the wishes of this population, and that more people will be destroyed on the battlefields than there are inhabitants in Alsace-Lorraine.

"Like Engels in 1892—more than two decades after the Peace of Frankfort—we cannot shut our eyes, especially to-day, to the fact that the population of Alsace-Lorraine, annexed in 1871 against its will, can only find peace when it has been given the opportunity of voting directly on the question of its national allegiance.

"If this vote is taken under conditions of complete freedom and tranquillity—for example, after a period laid down in the Peace Treaty—and, if it is similarly stipulated beforehand that the result of this referendum will be recognised as a final solution of this disputed question, which has separated Germany and France for nearly half a century, which has favoured the development of militarism on both sides, and which has placed a heavy burden on the economic budget of the two States and thwarted democratic activity, Europe, and not least Germany herself, would be delivered from a black nightmare. The German people would gain economically, politically, and morally more than they would lose, even if the final decision were contrary to their expectations.

" . . . Belgium.

"Complete political and economic independence of Belgium is inevitable. In fulfilment of the solemn promise of the German Government at the beginning of the war, the Belgian nation must receive reparation for the damage caused by the war, and especially for the economic loss which it has sustained

"Such reparation has nothing in common with war indemnities, which simply mean plundering of the vanquished by the victor and which we therefore reject.

"Colonial Questions.

"As opponents of any policy of conquest and foreign domination, we reject, as we have always done, a policy of colonial conquest. The possession of any colony which is not administered by its own population is nothing less than the possession of an unfree people and so no less irreconcilable with our principles than slavery. As a matter of fact, the right of peoples to free self-determination is not respected either by the acquisition or by the exchange of colonies. Further, the possession of colonies is not necessary from the point of view of economic development. It is, therefore, neither principles of justice nor the economic interests of the working classes, but simply considerations of political wisdom, which demand, as regards colonies, that the Treaty of Peace shall not contain changes which may be of a kind that will give rise to new causes of war."

### *Public Exposure of Majority Socialist Hypocrisy*

It is of interest to recall here the official press report, dated June 29, which the Organising Committee of the

Conference issued on the attitude of Haase and his friends :

" 111 The Delegates of the Independent Social Democracy of Germany expounded their ideas as regards peace efforts before the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee. Comrades Haase, Bernstein, and Kautsky, spoke at some length on this subject. Comrades Herzfeld, Hofer, Stadhagen, and Wengels, who had arrived by that time, supplemented their remarks. Haase concentrated on an historical review of the peace efforts made by the Opposition section of German Social Democracy from the outbreak of war. He showed by documentary evidence how the Opposition had from the beginning been fighting for the demands that are now put forward on all sides : peace without annexations or indemnities, based on the right of peoples to self-determination. He further demonstrated in detail how the Opposition had continually tried to force the Majority in the Reichstag and in the Party Executive to take an unequivocal and determined stand in conformity with these views, and how, because their efforts had been obstinately resisted, they had been compelled in the general interests of the proletariat and in pursuance of a world peace to defy party discipline, regardless of disciplinary measures and persecution by the Party Majority and the Party Executive. He showed that this was not a case of misunderstanding, but a profound conflict of fundamental ideas.

" Kautsky dealt with the peace program of the Independent Social Democrats of Germany. He pointed out how the so-called Majority Socialists in Germany appeared to have the same peace programme as the Independent Social Democrats, since both demand peace without annexations or indemnities, but how the agreement consisted solely in the use of the same words, to which the other section assigned a different meaning. He showed by reference to the resolutions on war aims adopted by the Party in August, 1915, and to the most recent memorandum of the Majority Socialists drawn up in Stockholm, that their views were not based on the principles of International Social Democracy, but were animated by the spirit of a nationalist policy based on force and inspired by militarist thought which rendered their attitude towards each problem dependent on the military situation. This he demonstrated in detail from the clauses dealing with Austria and Turkey, with Belgium, Poland, and Alsace-Lorraine. . . . "

The Stockholm meeting ended without any results. On its conclusion the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee published a statement by the Belgian Socialists, Vandervelde and de Brouckere, refusing to co-operate with German Socialism. The wording of this statement is of special interest :

" It seems to us that the war is less a war between nations than a struggle between two political ideologies. In this sense it may be described as a civil war within the community of nations. The Russian Revolution and the entry of the United States into the war have had the effect of ranging all the free nations on one side, while the other side is



almost completely isolated and is composed of the last three semi-absolutistic countries: Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey. We see no possibility of a durable peace so long as these remain in power. . . . We naturally do not refuse to meet with Germans, but we refuse to make contact with the German Socialists who support the Imperialism of the Emperor Wilhelm and Emperor Karl. We would not oppose joint action with those elements in the countries of the two Central Powers who are combating a policy of aggression and conquest and pursue the same aim as we ourselves. We would not refuse to meet German Majority Socialists if they gave up their present erroneous attitude and stood up to their rulers like men. But until this happens we must regard a meeting with them not only as futile, but also as dangerous to the cause of international democracy."

### *The German Peace Offensive of July 1917*

In the summer of 1917, the word "peace" was on many lips in Germany.<sup>1</sup> One reason was the initiative of the Vatican, which feared the consequences of a prolongation of the war and, though with limited hopes of success, tried to restore peace on earth.

On June 29, Mgr. Pacelli, the Apostolic Nuncio, was charged to deliver a personal letter from the Pope to the German Kaiser and was received by him at General Headquarters.<sup>2</sup>

The Pope in his letter stated how he had unremittingly adjured the belligerent peoples to lay down their fratricidal weapons, and assured the Kaiser that all his efforts were still directed to end the days of this enormous evil. At the same time the Nuncio, on the instructions of the Pope, made representations to the German Government in the matter of the deportation of Belgian workers; in reply, the Kaiser promised "to do his best"; then, in the course of an exhaustive conversation, he very warmly welcomed, without touching upon any details, any activity of the Pope that might bring peace nearer. Finally, the Kaiser declared that he was convinced that the time was propitious for the Church to act in the interests of peace. He added that there were two international bodies that might undertake this mission: the Catholic Church and Social

<sup>1</sup> Conrad Haussmann (*op. cit.*, p. 97) states that the "pressure of the political atmosphere in the Reichstag was stronger than ever before, and was intensified by the deep depression of the population in Berlin and the aimless vehemence of the Press organs of nearly all the parties."

<sup>2</sup> Recorded by von Bethmann-Hollweg, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 211.

Democracy. The latter had grasped the importance of peace propaganda and was acting accordingly. Social Democracy was thus rendering a lasting service. However, though he was a Protestant Prince, the Kaiser believed that it was in the interests of the Church itself that the Pope, rather than Social Democracy, should bring about serious peace conversations.

This interview explains many things. The German ruling class, that is to say, the German Supreme Command, as well as the Reichstag and big business, was sympathetic to the idea of ending the war by a negotiated peace while the Kaiser's armies were still in a favourable strategic position, dominating an extensive front. The Majority Socialists had hopes in connection with the Socialist International, and that was why they participated in the Stockholm Conference; while the eyes of the Catholic Centre were turned towards the diplomatic endeavours of the Holy See. The same German Catholics who had been enthusiastic over the U-boat, suddenly, under the influence of food-shortage, developed a tendency to favour a peace of “ understanding.” The feelings prevailing within the Centre Party were best described in a conversation reported by Herr Mueller-Fulda (Centre member of the Reichstag in 1917):

“ I met Erzberger in the Reichstag (on July 2) and discussed with him the dangerous feeling which had been aroused in many places because of the food shortage. He told me that Germany would have peace if she were really in earnest about it. He mentioned the proposed attempts at mediation on the part of the Pope, and said that it was now a case of backing it up by a demonstration on the part of the Reichstag for a peace without annexations ”<sup>1</sup>

It was in this atmosphere that the Reichstag's famous “ Peace Resolution ” was prepared in July 1917.

### *Peace Initiative of Herr Erzberger*

Let us now listen to the initiator of the Peace Resolution, Herr Erzberger: “

“ On July 6, in the General Committee of the Reichstag. . . . I said that we were now confronted with the problem whether we wanted to enter upon a new year of war, which would involve a war expenditure

<sup>1</sup> See C. Haussmann, *op cit.*, p. 384

<sup>2</sup> See M. Erzberger, *Meine Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg*, Chap. 19, p. 255.

of at least fifty millions, but no one could calculate how much of irrecoverable national power would be lost. The Government had for all this only the words, 'hold out,' but it was only possible to hold out internally if we were convinced that a substantially better peace could be achieved next year than now. I could see no such possibility. The machinery of our adversaries was getting stronger and stronger, while in our case shortage of manpower and raw materials was becoming increasingly apparent. The calculations concerning the effects of the unrestricted U-boat war had proved to be completely wrong. The Reichstag would not hang the Navy Secretary for this, but a man who had made such an extraordinary mistake could no longer expect from Parliament the confidence required for the further conduct of the war . . . To stop the U-boat war now, was impossible.

"However, in addition to the energetic conduct of the war, it was also necessary to work energetically and purposefully for peace in the political sense. It seemed to me that the best way for this purpose would be if a gigantic majority could be got together in the spirit of August 1, 1914, and would declare: Our attitude is that of a peace of understanding and we are striving for a compromise peace that knows of no forcible oppression of peoples and violation of frontiers .

"Such an announcement," Erzberger said, "could not be interpreted as weakness if it were added that if such a peace were refused, Germany would fight on to the last. . . Germany could certainly not conclude a peace of submission that would ruin our people, but reason ought to draw the political conclusions from the existing circumstances remorselessly and coldly. . . The people must never fling at the Reichstag the cruel phrase 'Too late!'"

The German politicians were playing an obvious game. They were cynically comparing the date of their peace campaign with August 1, 1914, a date on which the German soldier, supported by the public opinion of the whole country, was about to violate the soil of Belgium, Luxembourg and France. Their aim was not only to shift the responsibility for the continuation of the war on the Allies, after addressing a call for understanding and moderation to them. It was also a political manoeuvre designed to secure a white peace at a time when the Allies were daily getting stronger.

Erzberger, then, resolutely went into opposition to the Pan-Germans of the Right, and their "crazy" war aims. On July 3, 1917, he suggested to his Party, the Catholic Centre, to reaffirm that this was not a war of conquest! This, he said, would strengthen the sentiments of the people and make it possible to draw from the great masses the power which the Reich needed.

At the same time the German Government was asking

the Reichstag for a fresh war loan of 15 milliard marks. This presented an excellent opportunity for those who were already afraid of the clumsiness of the “Hurrah patriots” to make a demonstration in favour of a compromise peace.

However, the Government considered that it would be better to leave it to neutral quarters, for instance to the Holy See, and to await an appeal being sent from these quarters simultaneously to both belligerent parties. In this way Germany's desire to discuss peace would not be made public, because the initiative would come from a third party. The Government thought that a German initiative might be interpreted as a sign of weakness by the Allies and might damage the German cause. This explains the hostile reception given by the Government to Erzberger's suggestion, which it considered hasty and untimely. In order to frustrate Erzberger's move, Helfferich, the Foreign State Secretary, sent a telephone message to General Headquarters through von Stein, Minister of War, requesting Hindenburg and Ludendorff to come to the rescue. Meanwhile, many deputies, including members of the Centre, the Progressives and the Majority Socialists, deeply impressed by Erzberger's arguments, decided to join in the preparation of the Peace Resolution. Nevertheless, on July 12, Helfferich advanced the following argument against Erzberger :

“I have expressed it as my sincere personal view that I attach extraordinary value to the effect of our U-boat war on Britain and further that there have lately been certain signs of a slowing down in the case of one of our Western adversaries (‘highly confidential’); and that I am more optimistic as regards an early inclination to peace on the part of our enemies than one might express without the risk of not being taken seriously. Of course, I have reason to fear that the excesses in the Press, linked as they are with a campaign, would banish for a long time any inclination to peace on the part of our enemies.”

*Resignation of Bethmann-Hollweg—The New Chancellor,  
Dr Michaelis*

On July 9, 1917, Dr Stresemann, in connivance with General Ludendorff, gave a new turn to the situation in the Reichstag. He announced in an ambiguous speech his agreement with Erzberger without, however, committing

himself to the support of the Peace Resolution. He demanded some political reforms, and, in a more definite manner than the Centre and the Majority Socialists, the introduction of parliamentary government. At the same time, he fiercely attacked Bethmann-Hollweg's policy as being a complete failure.<sup>1</sup> Stresemann declared that the Chancellor, especially with regard to his statement about Russia, was so deeply committed that he actually stood in the way of the conclusion of peace. The sincerity of Stresemann's arguments may be measured by his complicity with the General Staff, which only wished to increase the confusion in the Reichstag, stiffen the hostility towards von Bethmann-Hollweg and then replace him by a more dependent successor. The Kaiser, alarmed by the controversy on the Home Front, had returned to Berlin. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg hastened to tell him about the momentary nervousness in the Reichstag, adding that it would be easy to overcome. He, the Chancellor, was sure of securing a vote of confidence in two or three days' time. He prevented the interview which the military leaders proposed to have with the Party leaders, and the Kaiser told Hindenburg and Ludendorff to return to the front where "they would no doubt find more important things to do." However, many Deputies did not intend to leave it at that. They did not give up their idea of acting in conformity with the wishes of the Supreme Command and of overthrowing the Chancellor. The Crown Prince, playing the game of the General Staff, associated himself with them and spoke accordingly to the Kaiser. But the latter still hesitated, refusing to yield to his son unless written statements demanding the change were sent to him. The Parties gladly agreed and handed the Crown Prince the required statements: Herr Erzberger on behalf of the Centre, Dr Stresemann on behalf of the National Liberals, and Count von Westarp on behalf of the Conservatives.

Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg was thus obliged to resign. He was replaced, on July 14, on the suggestion of Ludendorff, by Dr Michaelis, an official of no great calibre, until then Under-Secretary for Food.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arthur Rosenberg, *The Birth of the German Republic*, p. 172.

*Peace Resolution*

On July 19, 1917, a week after the Chancellor's resignation, the three big Reichstag Parties (Social Democrats, Catholic Centre and Progressives) finally passed their famous Peace Resolution. Its essential contents were as follows :

“ The Reichstag declares :

“ As on August 4, 1914, so to-day, on the threshold of the fourth year of war, the sentence in the speech from the Throne—‘ We are not impelled by the lust of conquest ’—holds good. Germany drew the sword to defend her freedom and independence and to secure the inviolability of her territorial possessions. The Reichstag aims for a peace of understanding and permanent reconciliation between the nations. Forcible territorial acquisition and political, economic or financial violations are incompatible with such a peace.

“ The Reichstag also rejects all plans aiming at the economic isolation and antagonisation of the nations after the war. The freedom of the seas must be assured. Only economic peace will prepare the ground for the nations to live together in freedom. The Reichstag will actively promote the creation of international organisations of justice.

“ However, so long as the enemy Governments refuse to enter into such a peace, so long as they threaten Germany and her Allies with conquests and violations, the German people will stand together as one man, hold out unflinchingly and fight until the right to life and development is assured for it and its Allies.

“ The German people is invincible in this unity. The Reichstag is at one in this with the men who are defending the Fatherland in heroic combat. They are assured of the undying gratitude of the whole people.”

The Peace Resolution was deliberately drawn up in vague terms. The Parties that had voted for it wished to create an atmosphere of international conciliation and understanding without, however, limiting the Reich's freedom of manœuvre by declaring precise peace aims. That was why Germany omitted to mention the problem of the restoration of Belgian independence, a fundamental one for the Allies. But the vagueness of the Resolution saved the three great German Parties from embarrassment later, when the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest came to be discussed. For since the Resolution did not commit itself to anything, either as regards the East or the West, its sponsors considered themselves free to refrain from opposing (if not to approve of) the annexations Germany was making under these Treaties. Erzberger was perfectly aware of

what he stood to gain from the vague phraseology of the Peace Resolution. Prince Max von Baden later recalled an interview he had with him on this subject, during which Erzberger explained: "You see, Your Highness—this way I get Longwy-Briey by negotiation."<sup>1</sup>

The Peace Resolution was moved during the debate on a new war loan. It was on that occasion that the new Chancellor made his inaugural speech. He began by shifting the responsibility for the war on Russian armaments, declaring that if he did not firmly believe in the justice of the German cause, he would not have accepted the task. He said:

"We must daily recall the events of three years ago, which historically establish and prove that we were forced into the war against our will . . ."

As regards the submarine war his argument was that Germany rejected:

"the reproach that the U-boat war is illegal and incompatible with the laws of humanity. Britain has pressed the weapon into our hands by force. By her blockade, which is contrary to international law, she has barred the neutrals from their legitimate trade with Germany and declared a war of starvation . . ."

"The last attempt Germany has made to avert the worst by means of a sincere offer of peace has failed. Therefore Germany is entitled and obliged to choose this last means, as a measure of self-defence, in order to use it to the utmost for the purpose of shortening the war. The U-boat is achieving what was hoped of it, and more."

As to the further course of the war, the new Chancellor was very optimistic: the tonnage would never be sufficient to transport an American Expeditionary Force to Europe: ". . . A calculation has been made as to the amount of shipping space required to transport an army from America to the European Continent, and the amount of tonnage required permanently in order to feed and supply this army. . . . Our Army, our Navy, and particularly our U-boats, will master this new situation as well. . . ."

On the subject of war aims, Michaelis, just like his predecessor, was most vague:

". . . This brings me to that which is in the focus of the interest of us all, to the core of the present discussion. Germany did not want the war—she was not striving for conquests or for the extension of her power by violence—therefore Germany will not carry on the war a day longer merely in order to make violent conquests if an honourable peace can be obtained.

<sup>1</sup> See Prince Max von Baden, *Erinnerungen*, p. 114.

"What we want in the first place is that we should make peace as people who have prevailed. To me this indicates the aims. In the first place, the territory of the Fatherland is inviolable. We cannot negotiate with an adversary who confronts us with a demand for Reich territory. When we make peace we must in the first place attain that the frontiers of the German Reich shall be secure for all time.

"We must guarantee the conditions of existence of the German Reich on the Continent and overseas through understanding and compromise."

It was in this somewhat peculiar spirit that the Chancellor interpreted the Peace Resolution; he reported on July 25, to the Kronprinz: "I have deprived it (*i.e.*, the Peace Resolution) of its danger by my interpretation. One can, in fact, make any peace one likes, and still be in accord with the Resolution."<sup>1</sup>

The Resolution had been presented on behalf of the three Parties by Herr Fehrenbach (Centre), who described it as being not a peace "offer," but a peace "announcement"; for it was for the enemy to make an offer, since Germany was the stronger party and since, on the other hand, she did not want the war.

Scheidemann, who took the opportunity to pay a tribute to the previous Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg, gave the most cautious interpretation to the Peace Resolution:

"Let the other nations know that we have no dreams of world conquest, no intention to violate, but are prepared to conclude a just peace for all, secured by international legal guarantees. Let the foreign nations know what the Reichstag solemnly announces: that we do not covet the property of others, but only want to safeguard our own. But if they want to take it from us, then we shall go on fighting. But then it will not be we, German National Reichstag Deputies, who will be to blame if the world changes into a wilderness. . . .

". . . The formula 'without annexations and indemnities' is definitely a protective one, as far as we are concerned. The time has come when in the interests of our Fatherland we must adopt this formula, with a view to protecting our country and our money from being taken away from us by others."

Herr von Payer, of the Progressive Party, went the full distance with him:

". . . But if our enemies prefer to continue the struggle, then from the higher point of view we shall have done our duty. We shall then lay the responsibility for the coming bloodshed and misery on our adversaries

<sup>1</sup> See Arthur Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 176.



Count von Westarp, the most typical of Prussian Junkers, who was accused by his parliamentary colleagues of excessive frankness and of being like a bull in a china shop, was afraid that this demonstration in favour of peace might give an impression of weakness outside Germany :

"Speeches and resolutions on peace and moral exhortations addressed to the enemy's conscience, such as we have heard to-day, will not bring us a step nearer to peace. The decision lies in another sphere. Complete victory will be the share of the heroic deeds of our troops on land and at sea. Relying on the judgment of our military leaders, we await the complete triumph of our arms with unshakable confidence. To them alone shall we owe peace.

"Germany will be ready for peace negotiations as soon as the enemy offers to negotiate, accompanying this with an absolute renunciation of his demand for forcible territorial acquisitions and indemnities. It will then be our task to shape the peace in such a manner that it should effectively safeguard the existence, future and free development of Germany and her Allies. . . Our frontier provinces must be better protected for all time, East Prussia must never again be exposed to the horrors of a Russian invasion."

And, supported by the "Deutsche Fraktion,"<sup>1</sup> he rejected the idea of a Peace Resolution.

Count von Westarp was followed by a National Liberal, Prince von Schoenaich-Carolath :

"... The achievements of our U-boats have not only fulfilled, but far exceeded all expectations. The number of U-boats is steadily increasing and, with it, the enemy's loss of shipping space, to an extent which he cannot bear for ever. We view the future with every confidence.

"But we still adhere to the statement in the speech from the Throne on August 4, 1914, that we are not impelled by lust of conquest. We agree that negotiations on this basis should be entered into with our enemies, as soon as they are prepared to do so, for the conclusion of a peace that will safeguard the existence and free development of Germany and her Allies and will render possible, through an adjustment of interests, a permanent reconciliation between the nations.

"But if our enemies, under the influence of their will to conquest, continue the war, then the responsibility will be on their shoulders."

Following the above pronouncements of the big Reichstag Parties, the Peace Resolution was accepted by the majority of the Reichstag, composed of the Catholic Centre, Progressive Party and Socialists.

<sup>1</sup> A party of twenty-eight members formed at the beginning of 1916 by the amalgamation of several groups: The anti-semitic Deutsche Reformpartei, the Bavarian Peasant Party, etc. Some of their best known representatives were Baron von Wangenheim, Baron von Camphausen, and Baron von Schele.

*Peace Initiative of the Holy See*

As the Peace Resolution was not only vague but also hedged round with many reservations formulated during the Reichstag debate, a fresh initiative by the Holy See, upon which Erzberger had built his hopes of a negotiated peace, could not produce any results. This initiative had a short but interesting history.

On August 30, 1917, a copy of a telegram handed by the British Ambassador to the Holy See on behalf of his Government and with the consent of France, was conveyed to the Reich Chancellor. It asked for a definite German declaration on war aims and the future destiny of Belgium. The copy of the telegram was accompanied by a letter from the Papal Nuncio, which read :

“ Munich, August 30, 1917.

“ Your Excellency,

“ I have the high honour to remit enclosed herewith copy of a telegram that has been handed by His Excellency the Ambassador of His Britannic Majesty to His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State at the Holy See. The French Government is in agreement with the statements contained in the telegram.

“ His Eminence is extremely desirous that my endeavours for the early attainment of a just and permanent peace, which the Imperial Government had shown such a courteous readiness to accept, should be effectively continued. His Eminence has therefore instructed me to call Your Excellency's special attention to the point relating to Belgium and to obtain : 1. A definite statement of the Imperial Government concerning the full independence of Belgium and compensation for the damage caused by the war in Belgium , 2. a similar definite statement of the guarantee of political, economic and military independence demanded by Germany. If this declaration is satisfactory, His Eminence thinks that an important step towards the further development of the negotiations will have been made. Actually, the British Ambassador has already informed his Government that the Holy See will reply to the communications contained in the aforesaid telegram as soon as, through my intermediary, it will have received the reply of the Imperial Government.

“ For my part, may I be allowed to express the firm conviction that Your Excellency, upon whose appointment to the supreme post the highly esteemed Papal proposal appeared, and who has shown such a favourable attitude to this work of peace, will earn undying merit as regards the Fatherland and the whole of humanity if the continuation of the peace discussions is facilitated by a conciliatory reply. In this anticipation I have the, etc., etc.

(sd ) Eugene Pacelli,  
Archbishop of Sardi  
Apostolic Nuncio.”

Erzberger records that the Reich Chancellor did not reply to this letter until September 24,<sup>1</sup> when he stated that he refused to make a definite statement concerning the German intentions as regards Belgium. This reply, then, brought to an end the Papal peace mediation.

*Counter-offensive of the Militarists*

Military circles were afraid that these various peace attempts might raise vain hopes in Germany, thereby weakening the aggressive spirit of the people. To revive that spirit, they proceeded to organize the "deutsche Vaterlandspartei," which was formed at the beginning of September, 1917, in Koenigsberg, under the leadership of Prince Johann Albrecht zu Mecklenburg, Grand-Admiral von Tirpitz and Generallandschafts-Director W. Kapp. The first great rally of the new militarist alliance took place on September 25, 1917, in the Berlin Philharmonic Hall. The principal speaker was von Tirpitz, who said that Germany could not attain power without a struggle, particularly at sea. It was Britain that wanted to hold Germany down. The deeper cause of the war was the difference between the British and the Continental mentality. The German blockade was entirely in accordance with law and justice. As regards Belgium, said von Tirpitz, she entirely deserved what had happened. There was never a genuinely neutral Belgium. She was always a bridgehead for Britain. Now Germany, not Britain, must become and remain Belgium's protecting Power. The realization of the Reichstag's Peace Resolution would in fact mean a German defeat and a victory for Anglo-American capitalism. In the East, von Tirpitz saw no insurmountable difficulties. Britain was the enemy. It was a matter of the freedom of the European Continent.

This Fatherland Party, which advocated the so-called "Hindenburg-Peace," contributed greatly, through its excessive demands, its propaganda against a "peace of starvation" (Hungerfrieden) and its branding of everyone who disagreed with it as a traitor, to the exacerbation of the atmosphere in Germany at a time when pessimism was growing throughout the country.

<sup>1</sup> Austria-Hungary on September 20, 1917, gave a vague reply to the Papal Note.

*October 1917 Reichstag Debate*

In the course of the debate on a new war loan, Haase, Independent Socialist, attacked the Government. He said :

"The Chancellor wants to achieve, in the first place, that the frontiers of the German Reich should be safeguarded for all time. This is a figure of speech from the phraseology of the Pan-Germans, which conceals their annexationistic plans. To understand the new Reich Chancellor's speech correctly, it must be complemented and more closely defined from the manner of his appointment as Reich Chancellor. Selected Members of Parliament had been asked by the Crown Prince what they thought of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg. It was a clever move on the part of those who wanted to eliminate him. But in connection with the appointment of the new Reich Chancellor the Members of Parliament were completely ignored. The appointment was inspired by high quarters and was a surprise to the whole of Parliament. Dr Michaelis is the confidant of Hindenburg and Ludendorff.

For the rest, the fact that the generals are being invited to collaborate in a political crisis throws a clear light on our constitutional conditions. . . . The new Reich Chancellor has informed us expressly that the political declarations have also received the approval of the Supreme Command. Is there a single other country in the world where anything like this would be possible? The fact that the military leaders are in agreement with the declarations of the Reich Chancellor proves in a striking manner that they cannot be interpreted in the sense of Deputy Scheidemann.

"From the point of view of war and peace policy it is of the utmost importance who holds, in particular, the post of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Herr Helfferich, who has a black mark against him on account of his approval of the U-boat war, is more of an obstacle to the conclusion of peace than any other man. Herr Scheidemann has intoned a serious complaint over the political effects of the intensified unrestricted U-boat warfare. Well, we said from the outset that we were against the U-boat war for reasons of international law and humanity. We pointed out from the outset that the unrestricted use of this weapon will cause America and other countries to join our enemies. But those who, like Deputies Scheidemann and Ebert, joined Count von Westarp and Deputy Bassermann in signing the famous U-boat Resolution, thereby proposing a more intensive use of this weapon and promoting unrestricted U-boat warfare, have no right to complain of these effects.

"They bear the full responsibility because they granted the means for such warfare to the Government that ordered the unrestricted U-boat war. . . ." Later in his speech, Haase said : ". . . The remark in the Peace Resolution concerning the beginning of the war is historically untenable. . . . As against that, we do not forget Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, nor Austria's arming against Russia, nor the consultations on the war that took place here in Berlin on July 5, 1914, nor the activities of the Herren Tirpitz and Falkenhayn in the critical days of

July, 1914. Nor can we erase from our memories the fact that the leader of the Centre was hitherto not against annexations and that he demanded that Belgium must come into our hands from the political, military, and economic points of view. As recently as February last, Herr Spahn was still demanding war indemnities . . . You will make no headway along this path; nor along the path taken by the Majority Socialists when they published their Memorandum in Stockholm. Socialists everywhere . . . have characterised this Memorandum of Herren Scheidemann, Ebert, David, Legien, Bauer, and their friends as an entirely mistaken document that will in no way advance the cause of peace. Our manifesto expresses that which the Socialists of all countries regard as the prerequisite for the attainment of peace, namely this program: No annexations, no indemnities, self-determination of the peoples and a struggle against any imperialistic Government that rejects this program or even replies to it evasively. . . ."

That was a voice sincerely raised in favour of peace. And again it was almost the only one.

In the course of the Reichstag debate, Herr Fehrenbach, Catholic Centre, asked the Government to make a statement on Belgium. Von Kuehlmann, the new Secretary of State at the Wilhelmstrasse who had just succeeded Dr. Helfferich, mounted the platform. Was he going to give a clear answer concerning the independence of Belgium? Not at all. He replied to the question by posing another:

"It is not the Belgian question, in the first place, over which the nations are at present fighting and shedding their blood. The issue on account of which Europe is being turned more and more into a heap of ruins is that of the future of Alsace-Lorraine. According to reliable information in our possession, Britain has given France a diplomatic undertaking to use her power and her arms in the interests of the return of Alsace-Lorraine so long as France herself adheres to this demand. . . . To the question, can Germany make any concessions to France in Alsace-Lorraine? we have only one answer: No, never. (Stormy applause from all parts of the House). What we shall fight for to the last drop of blood are not fantastic conquests, but the inviolability of the German Reich."

Herr Gradnauer, Majority Socialist, then made a charge against Britain. It was her fault, and Mr Asquith's, if the war was not ended at that time. He concluded:

"It has been said that a peace of understanding would mean simply a return to the *status quo ante*, but in my view that would be impossible. . . . The old Europe with all its sources of conflict cannot be resurrected; Europe must be re-built on an entirely new basis—with due consideration for the ideas now recognised by the Pope and also by the German Government,"

Next, Conrad Haussmann, Progressive, the *commis-voyageur* of peace in neutral countries, who was known in Switzerland and Holland as a liberal-minded German, spoke of war guilt. “Who,” he exclaimed, “was responsible for the war in the first place if not . . . President Wilson, and in the second place . . . Mr Lloyd George?”<sup>1</sup>

It was indeed amusing to re-read these debates in the midst of the second war. Then it was Conrad Haussmann *versus* Wilson and Lloyd George; yesterday it was Goebbels *versus* F. D. Roosevelt and Winston S. Churchill. The same arguments of the standardized German mentality, though in a different guise.

Now let us listen to Herr Stresemann, considering the importance of both the man and the issue:

“ . . The conquest of Riga is of the greatest importance not only from the military, but also from the political point of view . . . Hindenburg was right when he spoke of ‘liberated Riga.’ . . Our military situation was never more glorious than it is at present. Meanwhile, there is also the U-boat war, which is taking its course. The destruction of enemy tonnage that was expected of it on the basis of official predictions, has not only been achieved, but partly exceeded by more than half. . . .

“Time is working for us. Britain to-day is fighting the war with a watch in her hand, and it is in this that I see the fundamentally decisive effect of the U-boat weapon for us and the approach of peace.

“ . . If we are to achieve anything through compromise and understanding, then the Government must not be forced to make any statements renouncing something from the outset. For this reason the tactics by which it has been and is still being tried to make the Government declare its disinterestedness in Belgium, are wrong. Even those who share the attitude of Herr Scheidemann ought to fight for the last stone in Belgium, in order to exploit to the utmost that which possession has made into a dead pledge.

“ . . However, the fact that we are going to have peace—and, we hope, soon—will in my conviction be due, apart from our military achievements, to the effects of unrestricted U-boat warfare, of which I have repeatedly said before the Main Committee that while I reject the formula that it will force Britain to her knees, I believe as firmly in the formula that it will force Britain to the conference table. . . .”

Count von Westarp, speaking for the Conservatives, said:

“ . . it is the task of this war to liberate not only Germany, but the

<sup>1</sup> “The German War,” stated Haussmann, “is waged also for humanitarian aims. A nation that has surprised humanity by displaying such enormous power can only reconcile the world to the greatness of this power if it shows clear signs that there is a world conscience behind this power. Woe to the nation that calls out to the whole world: ‘Oderint dum mutuant!’ It would finally collapse under the weight of the hatred of the whole world.”

whole Continent of Europe from the one-sided, exclusive domination, the tyranny of Britain and the trustified American capital allied with it, across the seas and all over the world.

"The details of what the war must bring us emerge from this. It is the view of all my friends that the military situations and the military possibilities must be fully exploited, so that, by means of indemnities and reparations, the reconstruction of Germany after the war, and also a better protection of her eastern frontiers may be rendered possible.

"There will be no independent Belgium after this war. . . . It is untrue, deliberately untrue for Britain to say that she is fighting for the independence and neutrality of Belgium. Britain wants Belgium as a bridgehead on the Continent, as a spearhead against Germany. . . . In my view there will be only two possibilities after the war: Either a British Belgium, or a Belgium in the German sphere of influence and under German protection. For this reason I consider it to be an imperative duty in the defence of the existence and future of Germany to ensure that Belgium should come into the German sphere of influence. . . .

"It will be the task of the pen to exploit that which has been acquired by the sword."

Herr Warmuth ("Deutsche Fraktion") was mainly interested in the problem of population:

"Particularly from the point of view of demographic policy, colonisation policy, and therefore also the policy of territorial expansion, is of paramount importance. Only this morning I read the resolution of the Society for Demographic Policy, which is headed by the well known Counsellor Seeberg, and in this it is expressly stated that: 'The most important question in connection with demographic policy is the extension of our frontiers. . . .'

"If we emerge from the war without it being clearly apparent in the peace treaty that we have emerged as victors. . . . that is, that our enemies have had to resign themselves to give us rights, territories, and compensation—then our business man, when he goes abroad again, will not enjoy the respect that he absolutely must have. . . . The world wants to see power. It will give credit only to power. . . ."

His Party colleague, R. Mumm, quoted the following sentences from a memorandum presented by the German Society for Demographic Policy on May 19, 1917, to the Reich Chancellor:

"We require above all new territories for settlement, which, according to all demographic experience, most surely lead to a high birth rate and a high degree of military fitness. We can obtain such in the sparsely populated East, the more so as the territories adjacent to the Reich there are both ethnically and culturally completely detached from Russia and so sparsely populated that space is left for ample German settlement, as well as for the regaining of two million German-Russians, including many children. The low birth rate of the Latvians and the policy of depopulation carried on by the Russians in 1915 in the

evacuated territory, considerably extend the possibility of German settlement if we obtain a firm hold of territories of suitable extent”

Majority Socialist, Deputy Landsberg, replied to the protagonists of the “Vaterlandspartei” with some judicious remarks :

“A large number of reports we have received show that a concentric collaboration for the purpose of combating a peace of understanding has been agreed and is being carried on between the higher military authorities and the newly formed Fatherland Party. This fact impels us to make this interpellation. . . It is known that this new party, with its fine name, is a Pan-German promotion. The leaders of the Pan-Germans are its political promoters: Aldeutscher Verband, Wehrverein, Flottenverein, Kolonialverein, Ostmarkenverein, Independent Committee for German Peace—it is always the same men.

“People talk about the vital needs of our people. These consist in very different things from the ore basin of Longwy-Briey and Courland. When you listen to these gentlemen and look at the sheets of pictures in which it is shown what Germany must have in order to exist, you are really surprised that things have gone so splendidly during the forty-three years of peace since 1871, when we did not have all these things either.

“Further, the annexationist politicians ought for once to ask themselves what we shall really have won with the conquests, even if we are able to make them. Shall we have security if we have on both flanks of the Reich a resentful foreign-speaking population? . . . We have no talent for moral conquest, we would have in the new territories a population that would be mortal enemies of everything German, and why? Because we in this country forget that other peoples also have a soul . . .”

The Independent Socialist, Dittmann, began by quoting from “a leaflet bearing the name of a Baron von der Osten-Sacken, a major, as the author” :

“Those who want to force upon us a peace of renunciation are cheating our people out of the fruits of its victory and place themselves, consciously or unconsciously, into the service of our enemies . . . The German people will avenge itself on their lives when, in its anger, it realises that through such renunciation the British are afforded an opportunity to fall upon us again . . . We have triumphed on land, while the sea is dominated by our U-boats. . . Who, then, can force us into such a peace of renunciation? Only we ourselves.”

“A similar pamphlet by Lieutenant-General Keim, Military Governor of the Province of Limburg,” continued Dittmann, “is entitled: ‘Belgium and German Economic Life.’ It culminates in the following sentence ‘That is why it is absolutely necessary for us to strive for the possession of the Flanders coasts, because Britain would lie within the range of the guns of this coast’

“And here is another leaflet, entitled . ‘Why we must not conclude peace without territorial acquisition and without a war indemnity.’



This pamphlet was at the end of July displayed for the benefit of the lower ranks of the Crown Prince's Army in the West. The contents are similarly Pan-German.

"In so far as the blame for the outbreak of war lies on the German side," Dittman went on, "it falls to the account of the Pan-Germans and the military." (Speaker "Mr Deputy Dittmann, I cannot allow you to say in the Reichstag that the blame for the outbreak of war was partly on the German side.")

"... In the first war years we saw that all parties in this House were more or less carried away by nationalistic views. Minds were then befogged by the theory of violence. That was a triumph of Pan-German agitation. It was always said here that Germany must have security, guarantees, territorial expansion, as Deputy Dr Spahn expressly demanded in the name of all the bourgeois parties on December 19, 1915, in the course of the debate on the first Social Democratic peace interpellation. . . .

"Justice demands the admission that the majority of the Social Democratic Reichstag fraction has also long been pursuing the same wrong path. The Reichstag majority ought for once to show a will for firmness. It ought to force the Government to resign by refusing all further collaboration with it. Above all, it ought not to sanction any further war loans. For when the Reichstag reassembles on November 20, a fresh credit proposal will be submitted to it."

The Reich Chancellor, Michaelis, intervened briefly, in order to show the official optimism:

"So long as our adversaries confront us with demands that appear to be unacceptable to every German, so long will we hide the hand of peace in our folded arms. We shall wait and see. We can wait. Time is on our side. Until the enemy realises that he must set aside these demands, the guns and the U-boats must do their job. . . ."

Counter-attacking, Admiral von Capelle, on behalf of the Imperial Navy, made the Independents responsible for isolated cases of mutiny that had occurred on board some warships in October 1917. Herr Ebert, on behalf of the Majority Socialists, Dr Stresemann in the name of the Liberals, and Naumann in the name of the Progressives, supported the Government on this point. The debate ended as usual, with a vote by all the political parties—except, of course, the Independent Socialists—in favour of the new war loan.

### *War Aim, Formulated with a View to a Second War*

While the moderate Reichstag Parties were talking about a peace without annexations, General Ludendorff,

in September 1917, produced a long memorandum on war aims. The memorandum was conveyed by Hindenburg to the Chancellor. Its text is worth quoting, because it shows that the Quartermaster-General's idea was to achieve such war aims as would enable Germany to start a second war under more favourable conditions than in 1914, and with better chances of a decisive victory. Ludendorff had already realized that the first world war could no longer end with a complete victory for Germany. His hopes were already directed to the second world war. Is it not possible that the Third Reich's High Command reasoned also along the same lines? The memorandum read as follows :

“The Quartermaster General.

General Headquarters,  
September 14, 1917.

“In the course of the discussions in Berlin our own and our enemies' situation was discussed. I feel it incumbent upon me to revert to this matter again and to commit to paper the line of thought by which I was guided. I have extended it here with reference to Longwy-Briey, Agriculture and Overseas Trade

“According to the departmental representatives, our internal situation is difficult as regards fodder and coal—as regards coal, unfortunately not undeservedly, owing to omissions in previous months. Our financial economy is extraordinarily strained. The Reichstag majority has made our internal situation into a far from gratifying one. The labour, and therefore also the ‘ersatz’ question has become aggravated. But I think that these internal difficulties can be overcome by the firm leadership of the present Government. It is certainly possible.

“Austria-Hungary, for reasons which I do not wish to enter into here, is absolutely shackled to us for the next few months. Bulgaria is also getting more amenable, now that the French have achieved local advantages to the West of Lake Ochrida. Of the Turks we can be certain for the present. That our military situation is stable and the U-boat war effective, I need not elaborate further

“On the other hand, the situation of the Entente is considerably more difficult.

“Russia is heading for internal dissolution at an increasing pace. She is therefore becoming increasingly eliminated as a worthy opponent. The internal conditions are bound to lead to a food and fuel crisis next winter. These conditions will also react on Rumania. Conditions in the East have assumed a very favourable shape for ourselves. The other Entente Powers will no longer be able to reckon with Russia and Rumania to the full extent. No such phenomena exist in the case of our own alliances.

"Italy is apparently expecting a success in the 12th Isonzo battle. It will be denied her. The internal conditions are therefore heading for a crisis. The coal shortage is bound to become very serious. That a new Government of France will in the long run be more bellicose than the present one, is not to be assumed. The contrary is to be anticipated. France is also confronted with an impending coal shortage.

"All the latest reports from Britain agree that the U-boat war is effective, that the food situation is difficult, and that the British Government has to struggle with considerable social difficulties. The urge for peace is becoming stronger in Britain. I need not enlarge on this. Should Britain seriously contemplate peace, that would be a sign that she no longer believes she will win. From that to the conviction that she can only lose, is not a long step.

"Since the collapse of Russia, America has been the hope of the Entente. Though she must not be underestimated, she must not be overestimated, either. At the moment, Britain seems to be afraid that the leadership of the Entente will go to America.

"What the relations between Italy and her Allies are like, is a matter of doubt, but in any case considerable friction has arisen between the members of the Entente. As to great military successes, the year 1917 has so far not brought any to the Entente. The great successes of arms both on land and at sea (U-boats) have been on our side. I draw the following conclusion.

"Our military situation is more favourable than that of the Entente. Our alliances are firmer, our internal difficulties less great than those of the Entente. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that peace before the beginning of the winter would be worth striving for, if it brought us the most necessary things we require to secure our later economic development, and if it placed us, in the military and economic sense, in a situation where we could face a new defensive war calmly.

"The power sources of our military and economic resistance lie—apart from the Army and the Fleet—in Agriculture, our natural resources and our highly developed industry. Without Rumania and the other occupied territories, we should have got into a grave food situation. Even with Rumania, it has remained serious enough. It would become further aggravated if, as we must hope to do later, we also had to supply Belgium. We could not do this at present. We must therefore obtain more land. This we can find only in Courland and Lithuania, which offer good agricultural possibilities. In view of Poland's attitude, we must, from military considerations, move the frontier of Lithuania southwards across Grodno and to some extent widen East and West Prussia. Only then shall we be able to defend Prussia. The frontier also runs too unfavourably from the military point of view at some points in the Province of Posen. . . .

"Whether with Courland we shall exert an attraction on the other Baltic provinces, must be left to the further political developments.

"It will only be touched upon here how favourably a better food situation would influence our relations with the neutral States. Grain and potatoes represent power, like coal and iron."

Ludendorff now goes on to deal with the strategic situation of Germany's industrial regions :

“ Our natural resources and industries are situated as unfavourably as they can be on the frontiers of the Reich. The difficult situation of the Upper Silesian coal basin was recognised by the Government and Reichstag already before the war, and garrisons there were multiplied and strengthened. This alone is not sufficient, we must also protect Upper Silesia through a gain of territory. A liquidation of the works situated there and now in enemy possession, and their transfer into German hands, would facilitate this.

“ In the West we have the two great centres of the Lorraine-Luxemburg ore basins, with the Saar territory and the Lower Rhinish-Westphalian industrial area, which will develop increasingly in the direction of the Belgian and Dutch frontier. The danger to these areas has not become apparent in the present war because we anticipated the Entente with our advance. Besides, the importance of the industrial areas was at first not fully appreciated at all. There is now no doubt about this, and we must reckon with it that our enemies will try everything to strike at us in these territories. If they succeeded, we should not be in the position to conduct a defensive war. We should also be finished economically. I need not go into the internal political consequences. Secure protection of these two areas is a vital question to us. Here we must achieve what we can manage to achieve and what our position entitles us to. If we achieve nothing, then our position can only be viewed with grave anxiety and it would be preferable to continue the struggle and not think of peace yet. We must be clear that that which we fail to achieve will have to be compensated for in peace time, in so far as this is possible at all, by high military expenditure (anti-aircraft defence, maintenance of an air force, heavy garrisoning of frontiers).

“ The ore basin of Lorraine demands an extension of territory in the West. The greater this is, the easier will it be to secure the basin. If the pre-war frontier were maintained, this would produce the result that every political disturbance would react on the great masses of workers at the works. At the commencement of hostilities the work would be paralysed and the works exposed to destruction. The strip of territory to be acquired also contains mines. This accretion would enable us, first of all, to deal with our ores more economically in peace time. As the incidence of ores in Germany is unfortunately rather limited, this is not an inessential point. Above all, however, the strip of territory to be acquired would afford a guarantee that the mines now in Germany's possession could also be worked in war time if they had direct military protection. Naturally, the territory will always remain seriously menaced from artillery and aircraft, and will necessitate strong security measures, as we cannot extend our frontiers to the Maas.

“ It is all the more urgent to keep the Lower Rhinish-Westphalian territory intact. What the Flanders coast is to this country as regards aerial attacks on Britain, the line of the Maas at Liege is, to an even higher degree, as regards the industrial area. We must retain a firm

hold of the territory on both sides of the Maas and southwards as far as St Vith. So far the only means of achieving this that I can see, is incorporation with the German Reich. Whether there is another means, remains to be seen, for the present it seems to me that none has been found.

"Possession of the line of the Maas is not sufficient to give security to the industrial area. We must push back a British-Belgian-French army even farther. This can only happen if Belgium is so closely linked with us economically that she will also seek a political link-up with us. The economic link-up cannot be brought about without strong military pressure—long occupation—and without taking possession of Liege. Belgian neutrality is a phantom that must not be relied upon.

"We should only be completely secure, notably if the Dover-Calais tunnel becomes a reality, provided we carried out a military occupation of the whole of Belgium and were standing on the Flanders coast. Despite all Britain's difficulties, we cannot achieve this at present."

And in conclusion :

"The question is whether we must continue the war for the sake of this aim. That, in my view, is the case if the British retain a strip of territory in France (Calais). If they do not do this, then possession of the Flanders coast would be no reason for us to continue the war beyond the winter. We must then be able to achieve in a roundabout way the effect on Britain that we would endeavour to achieve from the Flandrian coast. I consider this possible if Belgium, economically closely linked with the German Reich, and divided into Wallonia and Flanders, would in time herself undertake her defence against France and Britain, keeping an army and Navy after the cessation of the occupation. The consequence of a Belgian *Anschluss* to Germany will be that Holland assuming a clearly aimed policy, would also be attracted to us, especially if her colonial possessions were guaranteed by a Japan allied with us. This again brings us to the continental coast opposite Britain, realising the aim for which the Navy, in correct recognition of its importance, is even now striving. We shall obtain a position opposite Britain which will enable us to maintain our trade in the next war. This is the third great aim of which we must not lose sight.

"In addition to Russia, overseas markets in South America, a colonial empire in Africa and naval bases within and outside the colonial empire, also enter into this. Notably, if we now renounced the Flanders coast, the Navy is entitled to demand bases by way of compensation, as stated by the Reich Chancellor, that will enable it in the next war to keep the way open for Germany to the world seas and, therefore, also for her imports from outside. The further we remain from this aim, the greater will be the means that we shall have to invest without interest in storing raw materials in Germany.

"The fact that favourable trade agreements with a Denmark closely linked with us would considerably enhance our naval power and our commercial freedom, need only be mentioned.

(sd.) Ludendorff."

*War Aims of Heavy Industry (December 1917)*

By a strange coincidence, General Ludendorff's war aims were similar to those of Big Business. At the end of December 1917, the "Association of German Iron and Steel Manufacturers" and the "Association of German Ironmasters"<sup>1</sup> submitted to Count von Hertling and Generalissimo von Hindenburg a Memorandum on the Incorporation of the French Lorraine Ironfields with the German Empire. It stressed, in particular, the necessity of the incorporation of the Briey-Longwy Basin, inasmuch as Germany's dependence on foreign countries for the supply of iron ore "constitutes a grave danger to German industry as well as to the German people." This long document reached the following conclusions:

"... Whoever has followed our survey from beginning to end, will certainly feel strengthened in the conviction that we cannot be too grateful to Bismarck, our Iron-Chancellor, for the fact that the peace of Frankfurt in 1871 gave us the minefields situated between Metz and Luxemburg, which were only partly known at that time. For without the ironfields of Lorraine we should never have been able to wage this war successfully, since it consumes such enormous quantities of iron and steel. Neither should we have been able, without Lorraine, in spite of our constant labour during 44 years of peace, to secure any appreciable results, either in our home economic development or on the world markets. Even less would the iron industry have succeeded in giving work to over two million men and food to the parents of several million souls

"In a German Empire deprived of Lorraine we should lack one of the elements that give the greatest vitality to German national unity and to the defensive strength of Germany. Our statesmen who, when peace is negotiated, will help in deciding the fate of the German Empire, will have to see to it that the future peace should incorporate with the German Empire all the foreign territories which are indispensable to our life, to our national prosperity and to our defensive power

"In the case of the strips of French frontier territories for which we are asking, it is not an annexation in the evil sense of the word but an incorporation of territories which, several centuries ago, were violently torn from the old German Empire.

"The displacement of our Lorraine frontiers is absolutely indispensable, not only for the security of the German Empire in a future war, but also for the consolidation of our national welfare, particularly in order to secure work for our great masses of workers, to increase the agricultural production of our soil and thereby to improve the situation of all Germans.

<sup>1</sup> The memorandum issued as "strictly confidential" in manuscript form was signed by the Chairman, W. Meyer, Dr Reichert, the General Manager Voegeler, and Dr O. Petersen.

"The retention of all Lorraine in the hands of Germany will provide us with a war indemnity and will consolidate the German Fatherland, it will also serve as the guarantee of lasting peace and a pledge for the safety of the Empire. Our victory gives us the opportunity as well as the right of adding, precisely where the edifice of the German Empire is most exposed to invasion, a corner stone against which all assaults of the foe will be shattered. If we neglect this opportunity, the German people in a future war will be doomed to ruin."

In other words, the German Iron Magnates were of the opinion that it was absolutely necessary for the successful waging of a future war to shift the frontier between Germany and France farther West, by incorporating the Ore Basin of Briey and Longwy with the German Reich. This point of view was maintained as late as in April 1918, by Prof. Dr. Martin Spahn, leader of the Catholic Centre, who tried to prove in a memorandum that this region belonged to the Mediæval Reich of eight hundred years ago and therefore must at the end of the war return to Germany.

### *Propaganda within the Army*

At this time the Supreme Command circulated in the ranks of the Army a publication entitled *Deutschlands Zukunft* (Germany's Future), published by Lehmann, who later became one of the most prominent supporters of the Hitler régime. It was stated in this publication that Germany was already in a position to "force Britain to her knees" and that, consequently, Germany was able to impose her war aims on her enemies, to wit:

"... Courland, Lithuania, Lettland, Estonia, the region round Vilna, Grodno, Minsk, Briey, Longwy, and Belgium are firmly in our hands. Pas-de-Calais and Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne, and half of the British Fleet will be surrendered to us. . . . We shall receive a war indemnity of 200 thousand millions."

### *Vorwaerts's "Revolution" in Germany Appointment of a New Chancellor*

November 10, 1917, saw the opening of the Inter-Allied War Aims Conference in Paris. On November 12, Mr Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, made a grave speech dwelling on the failure of the Allies to secure unity of strategical direction. The Italian defeats were a symptom. Three days later M. Clemenceau formed a new

French Cabinet. A unified Allied Command was now on the way.

In Berlin, Dr Michaelis, being judged incompetent by the Supreme Command, was on November 1 replaced by Count von Hertling, the Bavarian Prime Minister, one of the leaders of the Catholic Party, a close friend of Grand Admiral von Tirpitz and a supporter of the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare.

Count von Hertling, speaking in the Reichstag on November 29, hastened to stress the success of German arms both on land and at sea :

" . . It is with pride and gratitude that we may recall the fact that, nearly always and everywhere, our arms—our own and those of our Allies—have been attended by success

"The U-boat trade war is systematically exerting its tremendous, inescapable effect. It has been, and still is, the only smashingly successful means in the economic war forced upon us for striking at the vital nerve of our most dangerous enemy, the real leader of the whole enemy war-power. All observations have provided convincing evidence that the U-boat trade war will achieve the goal set for it. . . ."

Then speaking of the possibility of an early peace with Russia, he solemnly declared :

" . . As regards the countries of Poland, Courland, and Lithuania, which were formerly under the Tsarist sceptre, we respect the right of self-determination of these peoples."

The Chancellor, unlike his predecessors, placed the responsibility for the continuation of the war on the Allies :

" . . The responsibility for this continued slaughter, for the destruction of irreplaceable cultural treasures, for the insane self-laceration of Europe, rests on the Entente Powers alone. It is they who bear the responsibility, and they will also have to bear the consequences . . ."

Herr Scheidemann rejoiced over the change in the Chancellorship, which he interpreted as "a democratic achievement." He added, that, thank God, the Pan-Germans in Germany had "long been liquidated," whereas in Britain and in France the jingoes were still flourishing !

Stresemann expressed his gratitude to the "unmatched" Supreme Command, which enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the German people.

It was Haase again who, speaking on behalf of the Independent Socialists, told the Reichstag a few home-truths :

" . . If workers in Leeds, Lyon, or Milan hold peace demonstrations in the streets, the entire German press lauds them as pioneers of peace,



but if German workers do the same, they are abused. It is in this poisonous atmosphere that the Russian Armistice and the Russian peace offer are expected to succeed. We demand with every emphasis that the offer should be recognised and appraised in all its significance. An Armistice that does not involve the initiation of peace negotiations on the basis proposed by the Russian Government, would actually spell danger.

" . . . The situation, though clear enough in itself, was illuminated for the shortsighted as though by a flash of lightning in the course of the current month, when the 'Tägliche Rundschau' reporting the result of a Crown Council, stated that Russian Poland would be attached to Galicia and the Polish Kingdom thus formed would be linked with Austria-Hungary by a Personal Union, while Courland would be made into a Duchy and Lithuania into a Grand Duchy, and both would be linked with Prussia by a Personal Union. This has revealed a monstrous program of annexation that bears the impress of the darkest cabinet policy. Not even the most idiotic idiot can now honestly assert that the war is to be continued only to defend ourselves against our enemies' plan to smash us.

" . . . The *Vorwaerts*, the central organ of the Social Democratic Party, asserts, despite this clear state of affairs, that the plan of annexation is done with—this is one of its too clever manoeuvres, which it regards as the product of the highest wisdom, but whose only result is that the Socialists of other countries view this insincere policy with aversion. If this should be doubted, I need only refer to an article that appeared a few days ago in the *Socialiste Belge*. The article points out that the *Vorwaerts*, in its leader of November 6, had asserted that no enemy statesman could justify his war policy with plans of conquest on the part of Germany. Yet in an article that appeared two days later, it was stated that Germany had annexationist war aims which—the *Vorwaerts* itself said this—she was trying to realise during the war. This is what the *Socialiste Belge* writes into the *Vorwaerts* album.

" 'Does *Vorwaerts* understand now why there can be no question for the present of starting peace negotiations with the German Government, which is still adhering to its policy of force? Does *Vorwaerts* understand that the new political trend in Germany is only a sham? Does *Vorwaerts* understand now that the policy of Scheidemann and his friends is only shadow boxing by which we refuse to be deceived?'

"It is necessary to demand," Haase insisted, "that the Government should make a clear and unequivocal statement concerning Belgium, the Briey Basin, Courland, Lithuania, and Poland, and also concerning the Bulgarian plans (Macedonia, the Dobrudja), because the production of suspicion and distrust against German policy has been going on far too long."

However, perhaps the real sting of Haase's speech lay in the passages relating to Germany's home policy. He recalled the attitude taken by the Majority Socialists when Count von Hertling became Chancellor.

The Majority Socialists welcomed the event, describing it as a “revolution,” comparable as regards its political bearing to the Russian revolution. This enormity appeared in the *Vorwaerts*, which said :

“ . . . And yet the processes now taking place in connection with the establishment of Count Hertling’s new Chancellorship constitute a turning point in the internal political history of Germany which may be decisive as regards our entire development for decades to come. Even though we cannot yet say with absolute certainty that we have a parliamentary system in Germany, we can nevertheless say with certainty that the greater part of the journey from an authoritarian State to a State with parliamentary government has been covered in Germany. . . . Of course, we Social Democrats have no cause for excessive jubilation, for that which we have been pointing out for years is now coming to pass—that the parliamentary system is to a certain extent operating against us so long as Social Democracy has no absolute majority in the Reichstag.<sup>1</sup>

“ . . . The crisis that has concluded with the appointment of Count Hertling was particularly serious because it concerned not a personal change but a transition to a new system. In view of all the circumstances, it has been settled with surprising speed and ease. Its course confirms our old view that no people is riper for democratic progress than the German people . . .<sup>2</sup>

“ . . . Violent revolution in Russia, peaceful revolution in Germany—that is the significance of the day. While in Russia the power of the Bolsheviks was breaking through, in Germany the parliamentary system scored a fundamental success through quiet negotiations. . . .<sup>3</sup>

“ . . . November 8 has brought Germany the first parliamentary, and Russia the first proletarian Government . . . Let the Hertling-Kuehlmann-Payer-Friedberg Government prove both at home and abroad that a *bourgeois* Government can also produce positive results for international peace and national freedom.”<sup>4</sup>

### *The New War Loan*

On December 1, 1917, the Reichstag again entered into the question of war loans. Count von Roedern, State Secretary of the Treasury, speaking on behalf of the Government, said :

“ . . . The seventh war loan has produced the gratifying result which you know. Its effect has been that 1917, with a total loan revenue of more than 25 milliard marks, has surpassed the two previous years, 1915 and 1916. Of the 12,458 milliards of the seventh war loan, 11 7 milliard marks, that is, 94 per cent, has been paid up.

<sup>1</sup> *Vorwaerts*, November 2, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Vorwaerts*, November 3, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Vorwaerts*, November 9, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Vorwaerts*, November 10, 1917.

"The great success of this war loan proves that our method of financing the war is approved by the German people, while your past consent to the various loan and taxation bills proves that it is also approved by this House. In view of the first two readings of the loan bill, I hope that you will not refuse your consent to the present supplementary estimate, either . . ."

Herr Ebert, on behalf of the Majority Socialists, supported the Government, but expressed the hope that the peace would not be a dictated peace. Were not the Reichstag move of the previous July and the Pope's move in accordance with Lenin's proposal of peace without annexations and indemnities?

To which Ledebour, speaking on behalf of the Independents, replied with force:

"... We learn from the mouth of Herr Ebert that the reason his Party agree to the new war loan is that Messrs Lloyd George and Clemenceau . . . have made anti-peace statements. I myself was under the impression that these gentlemen were terribly embarrassed as to how to explain their consent to the war loans this time.

"Obviously they must have heaved a sigh of relief when Herr Clemenceau and Herr Lloyd George had presented them with such a pretext to signify their agreement to the war loans here. Otherwise it would be considerably more difficult for them to reconcile this statement with their acceptance of the invitation of the Russian Soviets for the joint peace work. They have tried to make the Bolshevik Party believe that they are in entire agreement with it as regards the shaping of peace . . ."

Alas, Ledebour was right!

### *Germany rejects Wilson's Fourteen Points*

On January 5, 1918, Mr Lloyd George made a war aims statement on behalf of Britain: the sanctity of treaties was to be restored, a more equitable territorial status achieved, the independence of Belgium and Serbia was to be guaranteed, the occupied parts of France, Italy and Rumania were to be liberated, and an independent Poland re-created. On January 8, President Wilson sent a Message to Congress containing his famous Fourteen Points program for future peace negotiations.

The points were the subject of discussion in Germany throughout 1918, but it was not until October 12, 1918, that is to say at a time when fate had already decided against the German Armies, that the Kaiser's Government

informed President Wilson of their acceptance of the terms laid down by him in the Fourteen Points and in subsequent addresses "on the foundation of a permanent peace of justice."

The Fourteen Points<sup>1</sup> were as follows: 1. Abolition of secret diplomacy; 2. Freedom of the seas alike in peace and in war except as the seas may be closed by international action or the enforcement of international covenants; 3. Abolition of economic barriers and equality of trading opportunities for all countries; 4. General disarmament; 5. A just settlement of all colonial aspirations; 6. Evacuation of all Russian territory, and the entry of Russia into a society of free nations; 7. Evacuation and reconstruction of Belgium; 8. Evacuation and reconstruction of the occupied territories of France, and the reparation of the injustice done to France in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine; 9. Adjustment of Italy's frontiers according to national principles; 10. Liberty for the peoples of Austria-Hungary; 11. Restoration of Rumania, Montenegro and Serbia, and the provision to the last-named of access to the sea; 12. The freeing of the non-Turkish peoples from Turkish rule; 13. Restoration of an independent Poland with a free access to the sea; and 14. Establishment of a League of Nations.

In Germany, the reaction was unanimously hostile. Even the Parties that had voted for the Peace Resolution in the Reichstag did not hesitate to criticise the Fourteen Points. The Catholic *Germania* declared: "Wilson's message, which may at least have some effect in war-mad America, makes as much impression on us as his former bullying pronouncements."

The tone of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the *Vossische Zeitung*, the *Muenchener Neueste Nachrichten*, the progressive *Berliner Tageblatt*, was more or less similar to that of the militarist papers.<sup>2</sup> Last but not least, the *Vorwaerts* declared that the whole German people were united that on such a basis "no peace can be concluded"; Germany would be prepared to send representatives to a General Peace Conference only if the German people were not

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I Seeberg, *Wilson Botschaft und die vierzehn Punkte*, Berlin, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Taegliche Rundschau*, *Die Post*, etc., of January 10, 1918, and following days. As regards Big Business *Rheinisch-Westfaelische Zeitung*, article entitled "Wilson's Clumsy Trap," January 10, 1918.

asked to abandon "what they possessed before the war and nothing dishonourable were required of them."

The Imperial Chancellor, Count Hertling, commented on the Fourteen Points on January 24, 1918. He associated himself only with the first four Wilsonian principles :

" . . The first Point," he said, " demands that there should be no more secret international agreements. . . The fact that the Brest-Litovsk negotiations took place in public proves that we could well agree to this proposal and declare the public character of negotiations as a general political principle . . In his second Point Wilson demands freedom of the seas. But it would be of very great importance for the future freedom of shipping if strongly fortified naval bases on important international trade routes, as maintained by Britain at Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Hongkong, and the Falkland Islands, could be dispensed with. As regards the third Point—elimination of all trade barriers We too condemn an economic war that would inevitably be pregnant with the causes of future warlike complications As to Point four—limitation of armaments As we have already declared earlier, the idea of limitation of armaments is an eminently discussable matter . the difficult financial situation of all the European countries after the war might promote a satisfactory solution in this matter Thus, Gentlemen, you will note that on the first four Points an agreement might be reached without difficulty "

As regards all other Points, he either interpreted them so as to distort their meaning, or blankly rejected them. As a whole it was an official rejection, von Hertling considering the "guarantee" in Germany's hand as being merely a matter for a deal between herself and her victims.

" . . I now turn to the fifth Point," said Hertling, " which is the acceptance of arbitration in all matters referring to colonial aspirations and disputes. I am of the opinion that for the time being we can leave it to the biggest colonial power, England, to see how it can adapt itself to this point of its Ally's programme Something will have to be said on this point when the time comes to discuss the reorganisation of world colonial possessions, a reorganisation which is certainly also amongst our demands

" The sixth Point refers to the evacuation of Russian territory In view of the fact that the Entente Powers have refused to join in the negotiations in the period left open to them by Russia and by Germany and her Allies, I must, in the name of the latter, now reject this belated attempt to interfere In this respect we are faced with questions which are an exclusive matter for Russia and Germany and her Allies

" As regards Point seven, the Belgian problem, my predecessor has declared repeatedly that the forcible incorporation of Belgium into the German Reich has never been a point in the program of German foreign policy. The Belgian problem belongs to that complex of questions whose details will have to be settled by the war and the peace

negotiations. Until our enemies accept without reservation the principle that the territorial integrity of the Allies, *i.e.* the Central Powers, represents the only possible basis for peace negotiations, I must stand by what we have previously said and refuse to detach the Belgian affair in advance from the general discussion.

“The eighth Point,” continued the Chancellor, “refers to the evacuation of occupied French territories. The occupied areas of France are a valuable pledge in our hands. Here again, forcible incorporation is no part of German policy. The conditions and modalities of evacuation which must take into account Germany’s vital interests are to be agreed between Germany and France.

“I can only stress again that there can be no question, now or at any time, of any surrender of territory forming part of the German Reich. We shall not permit our enemies to deprive us of our Reichsland (Alsace-Lorraine) under any fine-sounding pretexts whatever. Our Reichsland, eighty-seven per cent. of which speaks our German mother tongue, has integrated itself more and more with Germanism.

“With regard to points nine to eleven inclusive, which deal with such questions as the Italian frontiers, the nationality problems of the Danubian Monarchy, and the Balkan States, I propose to leave the answer to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Close relations with the Allied Danubian Monarchy is one of the cardinal points of our present policy and it must be the guiding line for us in the future also. And, therefore, on our part we shall do everything possible to bring about a peace which takes the just aspirations of Austria-Hungary into consideration also.

“With regard to point twelve, which refers to our heroic and powerful Ally, Turkey, I do not wish to anticipate in any way the attitude of that country’s statesmen. The territorial integrity of Turkey and the security of its capital, which is closely connected with the question of the Dardanelles, are also vital interests of the German Reich.

“Point thirteen deals with Poland. It was not the Entente Powers, which had only empty phrases to spare for Poland and did not approach Russia on her behalf, but the German Reich and Austria-Hungary, that have freed Poland from the oppression of the Tsarist régime which had crushed its nationhood. Therefore let them leave it to Germany, Austria, and Poland to come to an agreement concerning the future shape of Poland.

“The final point deals with the League of Nations. If on closer examination this idea proves to have been conceived in a real spirit of absolute justice towards all and in absolute and unprejudiced equality towards all, then the Imperial Government will be very pleased to discuss the basis on which such a League of Nations could be established when all current questions have been settled.”

The Chancellor added :

“Let them note. Our military situation was never so favourable as it is now. Our brilliant military leaders view the future with undiminished confidence in victory. The whole Army is animated by an unbroken combative spirit. . . .”

In the following Reichstag debate, R. Mumm (Conservative) demanded the annexation of the French iron-ore basin of Longwy-Bricy " with the oldest established right of all, the right of conquest."

Deputy Trimborn, Centre Party, a close political friend of the Catholic Reich's Chancellor, welcomed and supported the Government statement in all its details. The second speaker for the same Party, Deputy Erzberger, said :

" The difference between Wilson and Lloyd George is still very great, and therefore the Reich Chancellor was right to address himself more to Wilson than to Lloyd George. If no peace by understanding comes about now it will be proved once again that the responsibility for the prolongation of the war rests on the Entente. It is beyond question that Alsace-Lorraine must remain German "

Gustav Stresemann, National Liberal, went even further, " interpreting " Germany's program in the West and East as follows :

" There is much sentimentality in the fourteen Points of Wilson's peace program. As far as we are concerned the question of Alsace-Lorraine is one that we cannot discuss and it cannot even be raised at any international conference. The territorial integrity of Turkey must be maintained. The Reich Chancellor has declared that we do not seek the annexation of Belgium. However, the Flemish movement is working for independence. The Reich Government should make it its task to support this movement. With regard to the question of self-determination . . . it must be remembered that there is no political education in Lithuania and that from seventy to eighty per cent. of the population there is illiterate "

At the same time Stresemann launched a diatribe against Poland, which, in his view, did " not need freedom."

The speech of the Left-Liberal Deputy Fischbeck of the Progressive People's Party, showed that the Left intended to use the right of self-determination of peoples to justify German expansion in the East : " the peoples of the East want independence. It would seem desirable to support them in this, by developing in particular the principle of popular representation. It is not so easy to withdraw our troops. . . . Conditions are still too uncertain . . . "

On behalf of the Social Democrats, Scheidemann delivered himself of the following pronouncement :

" A speedy peace can be concluded on the basis of no annexations and no indemnities. Wilson's speech would seem to open some possibility in this direction " But—

“ . The shocking thing is that the struggle goes on, though it should long have been realised on both sides that the war cannot be ended with a great military decision. We have overrun whole countries and have driven enemy governments out of their homelands, yet we have not achieved peace. And if the youth of Germany and France finally bled to death and Britain and France were completely defeated, would we then have peace with America? Alsace-Lorraine is German territory and must remain so. It is a matter of course that German possessions should remain German.”

He had nothing whatever to say about the wish of the population of Alsace-Lorraine to get away from Germany, to which their territory had been forcibly annexed in 1871.

The future representative of Weimarian German democracy had not learnt much from Karl Marx who, on September 5, 1870, three days after the battle of Sedan, in a manifesto of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, issued the following warning :

“ . . . But, we are told, it will be at least necessary that we take Alsace-Lorraine from France. The war camarilla, the professors, the burghers, and the armchair politicians claim that this is the only way to protect Germany for all time from a French war. On the contrary, it is the surest way to transform this war into a European institution.

“ It is the infallible means of converting the coming peace into a truce to be broken as soon as France has recuperated sufficiently to recapture the lost territory. It is the infallible means of ruining France and Germany by mutual slaughter.”

In the Reichstag, two voices could be heard crying in the wilderness, those of Haase and Ledebour, who wound up the discussion. The latter declared : “ As once before, a great opportunity has been missed of coming closer to the longing of the peoples to come to peace. Indeed, there has been retrogression : a complete adaptation of the political leadership to the ideas of the militarists.”

Needless to say the German press gave full support to Count von Hertling's ideas.

On February 3, the Allied Supreme War Council published a statement emphasising that in view of the declaration of Count Hertling and Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Czernin, the only issue that remained for the Allies was the vigorous prosecution of the war. On February 11, in an address to Congress, President Wilson re-stated the American war aims by way of reply to the speeches of Hertling and Czernin.



On February 25, Count Hertling replied by again trying to fix responsibility for the war on the Allied statesmen :

" . . . In contrast with the Central Powers, the Entente has from the outset been pursuing aims of conquest. It is fighting for the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine to France. I have nothing to add to what I said on this subject before. There is no Alsace-Lorraine question in the international sense. If there is such a question, it is a purely German question.

" The world is longing for freedom . . . But the Governments of the enemy countries always manage to whip up the fury of war among their peoples again. Of course in England recently other voices have also made themselves heard . . . One can only wish that such voices should multiply . . . for the world is now confronted with the greatest, most fateful decision. Either our enemies decide to make peace—on what terms we should be prepared to enter into negotiations, they know—or think they must go on with the criminal insanity of the war of conquest, and then our magnificent troops under their brilliant leaders will continue the struggle. That we are equipped for the purpose, and to what extent, is sufficiently well known to the enemy as well, and our wonderful, gallant people will hold on. But the blood of the fallen, all the misery and all the suffering of the peoples will be on the heads of those who obstinately refuse to hear the voice of reason and humanity "

As regards Belgium, the Chancellor had this to say :

" . . . It has been said repeatedly here that we are not thinking of keeping Belgium, of making the Belgian State into a component of the German Reich ; but that, as stated in the reply to the Papal note, we must be safeguarded against the danger that the country with which we want to live in peace after the war, should become the object or the terrain of enemy machinations. The means to achieve this goal and thereby serve general world peace, should be discussed in a circle of this kind. . . . "

A little later, February 27, Stresemann in the Reichstag spoke thus about Belgium : " The Belgian question must not be detached from the complex of Western questions, as a whole Belgium is a valuable dead pledge. The solemn promises made to the Flamands and Wallons must not remain unimplemented."

This seemed to be his reply to the Memorandum on War Aims issued in London by the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference, February 20-24, where, among other points, the following scheme had been adopted as regards Belgium :

" The invasion of Belgium and France by the German armies threatens the very existence of independent nations, and strikes a blow against all faith in treaties. In these circumstances a victory for German imperialism would be the defeat and the destruction of democracy and liberty

in Europe. The Socialists of Great Britain, Belgium, France, Italy, and Russia do not aim at the political and economic crushing of Germany, they are not at war with the people, but only with the Governments by which they are oppressed. They demand that Belgium shall be liberated and compensated. . . .”

### *Internal Situation in Germany*

When the German Government and the principal political parties in the Reichstag rejected the peace program formulated by President Wilson, the only reason for their intransigence were the German victories over Russia, which was then completely enfeebled through revolutionary convulsions. They were only too glad to forget the clouds that were gathering in the West. Yet the increasing power of the Entente was making itself increasingly felt even inside Germany herself, where the food situation was steadily deteriorating, causing grave discontent among the people, particularly in the industrial towns.

On January 28, 1918, there were big strikes, involving some ten per cent. of the industrial workers. Apart from their requests relating to internal policy, the strikers had also urged peace “without annexation or indemnities.” However, a German Radical-Socialist writer<sup>1</sup> records that:

“No one among the strike leaders had any interest in prolonging this state beyond a few days, and no one wished to develop the strike to proportions beyond the limits of a peaceable demonstration.”

The Reich Government, supported by the Christian Trade Unions, refused to negotiate with the strikers and proclaimed intensified martial law. A week later everything had gone back to normal.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arthur Rosenberg, *The Birth of the German Republic*, p. 214.

## CHAPTER IV

### PEACE TREATIES WITH ANNEXATIONS AND INDEMNITIES.

#### *The Russian Revolution*

ON March 15, 1917, revolution broke out in Russia, the Tsarist régime having been finally discredited by continual defeats at the front. Tsar Nicholas was forced to abdicate and his régime was succeeded by a number of Republican Provisional Governments. The first of these was formed on the day of the outbreak of the Revolution by Prince Lvov (with Miliukov as Foreign Minister), and the subsequent ones by Kerensky.<sup>1</sup> Their common declared aim was to carry on the war by the side of the Allies, in conformity with the pact of London of September 5, 1914, whereby the Entente Powers undertook not to enter into any separate peace negotiation with the enemy. This attitude was not in accordance with the wish of the Russian people, which was exhausted by three years of war, and demanded "Peace, Bread and Land." The Bolshevik Party promised to fulfil these three demands by concluding a separate peace with the Central Powers and distributing land among the peasants.

The head of the Party, Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov-Lenin, was at the outbreak of the revolution in exile in Switzerland. The Party's international program had been formulated at the international conference of parties of the extreme Left in September 1915, at Zimmerwald, Switzerland. The Conference published its program in the form of a manifesto on September 15. Here are the pertinent passages :

"The ruling forces of capitalist society must bear the whole burden of responsibility for this war, which is the product of the social order whereby they are nurtured and protected, and which is being carried on in their interests. . . . In this intolerable situation we have met together—we representatives of Socialist parties and trade unions, or

<sup>1</sup> Minister of Justice in the cabinet of Lvov (March 15-16, 1917) ; Minister of War and the Navy in Lvov's second cabinet (March 16, 1917). Head of the Government from July 15, 1917, until the arrival of Lenin.

minorities of them, we Germans, French, Italians, Russians, Poles, Letts, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Swedes, Norwegians, Dutch, and Swiss—we who stand not for solidarity with the exploiting class, but for the international solidarity of the workers and the class struggle . . . This struggle is also the struggle for liberty, for the brotherhood of nations, for Socialism. The task is to take up this struggle for peace—for peace without annexations or indemnities. Such a peace is possible only if the thought of violating the rights and liberties of the nations is condemned. There must be no violent incorporation either of wholly or of partly occupied countries. No annexations either open or masked, likewise no forcible economic union. . . The right of nations to decide their own destiny must be the immovable fundamental principle of international relations.”

This was the doctrine that Lenin was going to put into effect in his country. When the news of the break-up of the All-Russian Empire was confirmed, Lenin made every effort to get back to Russia. After several attempts, he obtained through the intermediary of the Swiss Communist Platten, permission to travel across Germany, together with his wife, Krupskaya, and thirty other Bolsheviks. The Wilhelmstrasse granted permission under pressure from the High Command which, aware of Lenin's program, was hoping to create in Russia, through him, a situation favourable for a separate peace. This was indispensable if the German forces were to be concentrated on the Western Front. In addition, Austria-Hungary considered that its power of resistance depended largely on the cessation of hostilities in the East. Count Czernin, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, was to declare some time later :

“Peace at the earliest moment is necessary for our salvation and we cannot obtain peace unless the Germans get to Paris—and they cannot get to Paris, unless their eastern front is free.”<sup>1</sup>

A few months after Lenin's return, the internal situation in Russia became still further complicated. There had been mutiny in the Baltic Fleet; the border provinces were manifesting separatist tendencies; and the provisioning of both the armies and the civil population had broken down. But the problem that was causing the Provisional Government the greatest anxiety was the separatist movement in the Ukraine, which was assisted

<sup>1</sup> Letter to a friend, dated November 7, 1917. See Count O. Czernin, *In the World War*, 1919, London.

by the Central Powers as the most effective means of bringing about the disintegration of Russia. Professor Hruschewsky, author of the book, *Geschichte des ukrainischen (ruthenischen) Volkes*, which was published in Leipzig in 1906, now took advantage of the confusion prevailing in Russia to create a National Council (Rada) in Kiev. This Council claimed to speak on behalf of the entire Ukrainian nation. At first it demanded only autonomy within a Russian Federation. Although Kerensky, then Minister of War in the Lvov Government, promised the Rada to refer its demands to the future Russian Constituent Assembly, the Rada proceeded to extend its program, notably demanding the right to create a separate Ukrainian military organization and to be directly represented at any Peace Conference. By July 1917, the Ukrainian crisis had become so acute that it largely contributed to the resignation of the Lvov Government, which on July 15 was replaced by a Kerensky Government.

During the same month, the Russian armies suffered further grave defeats, abandoning the whole of Galicia and making a hasty retreat at the rate of several miles per day. Military discipline was non-existent; the soldiers often left the trenches and went to swell the ranks of the discontented in the interior of the country.

The conditions seemed favourable for a *coup d'état*, and the Bolshevik Party was preparing to attempt one, intending to seize the Government; it had the support of the Petrograd garrison, the sailors of the Baltic Fleet and the soldiers and sailors of the fortress of Kronstadt, while in view of its promise of immediate peace it could also rely on the support of the masses in the capital. However, Kerensky succeeded in warding off the blow by the sudden arrest of the leaders of the Party, including Trotsky and Kameneff; Lenin was obliged to seek refuge in Finland. However, the arrested leaders were soon released, and three months later Lenin himself returned to Petrograd.

The Kerensky Government pursued the same vacillating policy in everything else, which only served to increase the popularity of Lenin and his collaborators, with their continued propaganda for an immediate peace. Meanwhile, the Germans occupied Riga.

On November 3, Lenin was able to say that "there is no doubt that the revolution in Russia has reached its turning point . . . the final stage of the crisis is ahead." In fact, on November 7, the Kerensky Government was eliminated, almost without a blow being struck, by the Petrograd Soviet of Soldiers, Sailors and Workers, that is, by the Bolshevik Party. On November 10 a new Government was formed, with Lenin as Premier, and Trotsky as Foreign Commissar; Stalin was also a member of the Government.

The new Government immediately proceeded to implement the promise made to the Russian people by starting peace negotiations with the Central Powers. On December 2, a Russian Armistice Commission led by Joffe crossed the German lines at Dunaburg. On December 15 an armistice was concluded for one month; it was to be extended month by month. The phase of peace negotiations had thus been reached.

The prelude to actual negotiations took place on December 19, at Bad Kreuznach, where a Crown Council was held on that date, the principal participants being the Kaiser, Chancellor von Hertling, Foreign State Secretary von Kuehlmann, Marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff. The Supreme Command demanded that a Carthaginian peace should be imposed on Russia, vast territories being detached from the Russian Empire. They had in mind Finland with its timber and hydraulic power resources, the Baltic countries with their agriculture and seaports, Poland with her agricultural and industrial production and, above all, the Ukraine, Russia's granary and a great source of coal and iron ore. All this seemed necessary in order to counter-balance the Allied blockade and also in order to build up Germany's economic power to such an extent that she should be able to wage another war against the Western Powers with greater chances of success than in 1914. The only man to express doubt was von Kuehlmann, but the Crown Council adopted the High Command's view. Von Kuehlmann was instructed to go to the General Headquarters of the Eastern armies to join Prince Leopold of Bavaria, the Commander-in-Chief, and his Chief of Staff, General Max von Hoffmann. The High Command's plan was to be carried out. In order to succeed,

it was necessary to play out the Ukrainian ace, and this was done. As the demands of the Rada of Kiev had meanwhile increased and its conflict with the Petrograd Government had become so bitter that it had led to guerilla warfare between the respective partisans, the Central Powers had an easy task. On December 24, at the suggestion of the Germans, the Rada sent a separate Delegation to Brest Litovsk, declaring at the same time that :

"The Ukrainian People's Republic acts independently in matters of international law and desires, like other Powers, to participate in all peace negotiations, conferences, or congresses."

When, on January 8, 1918, the conversations at Brest Litovsk began, the Russian delegation, which was led by Trotsky, was confronted with a Ukrainian delegation which no longer concealed their claims to Ukrainian independence. The delegations of the Central Powers treated the Ukrainians on an equal footing, playing them off against the Russians, who thus found themselves in a most embarrassing situation. The Russian Government tried to counter this by establishing, at Kharkov, a Communist Ukrainian Government in opposition to the Rada of Kieve, the former declaring itself in favour of federation with Russia. Moreover, Russian troops started hostilities against the Rada, and on February 8 occupied Kiev. However, in a game of *faits accomplis* it is always the stronger side that wins. The Central Powers replied by signing, on February 9, a Peace Treaty with the Ukraine, thus ratifying both the independence of that country and the supreme authority of the Rada. The Russian delegation then declared that it would sign no peace treaty with the Central Powers. At the same time, Trotsky declared that the war was nevertheless over for Russia, summing up the situation in these words : "Neither war, nor peace." Whereupon the German High Command, determined to force Russia to give formal recognition to the treaty with the Ukraine, ended the armistice and resumed hostilities.

### *Peace Treaty with the Ukraine*

After the signing of the Peace Treaty with the Ukraine, the Treaty was submitted to the Reichstag for ratification.

Its purport, of course, was the dismemberment of Russia for the benefit of Germany, for the new Ukrainian Republic formed under the protection of the German bayonets was only a fiction designed to cloak a huge annexation by the Reich. The principle of self-determination was thus being used to acquire the immense wealth of the Ukraine for Germany in this convenient form. It was now the Reichstag's turn to reply frankly to the question whether it wanted to remain true to the Peace Resolution of July 1917, that is, to the principle of peace without annexations and indemnities. What was the attitude of the Reichstag majority that had voted for that Resolution? Here is the answer.

On February 19, 1918, the Reichstag began to debate: (a) The Peace Treaty signed at Brest Litovsk on February 9, 1918, between Germany and her satellites on the one hand, and the new Ukrainian People's Republic on the other; and (b) The German-Ukrainian supplementary agreement signed on the same date at Brest Litovsk.

Deputy Speaker Dr Paasche said:

"... Since we interrupted our labours on December 1, there have been no particularly gratifying military successes to record. Not all our hopes have been fulfilled, but ten days ago we succeeded in concluding an honourable peace with the newly founded Ukrainian Republic. This peace represents an important step forward... The very near future will show that the great economic importance of this big rich territory will be of the greatest importance for our economic development in the future. This peace has shown that we are taking the Kaiser's words—'We are not waging a war of conquest'—seriously."

Dr David (Majority Socialist), said:

"... In the Ukraine it is our interest that the peace, which of course we too welcome, should produce the fruits we desire, that our hopes that grain and other agricultural produce may be brought to us from there shall be fulfilled.

"Considering these circumstances, we are of the opinion that matters can be so arranged that the nations may find permanent satisfaction, and that Eastern Europe can thereby be led to permanent pacification. That is possible if when settling things forcible unilateral intervention is renounced... Then the great aim that is our real aim as regards the East will emerge. Beyond all individual questions, we must set the aim that Germany, and Central Europe in general, should enter into permanently amicable political and economic relations with Eastern Europe, Greater Russia and the entire complex of these territories and nations. Such a state of affairs would afford us the best safeguard even



if we did not succeed in obtaining peace in the West. This opens up the perspective of a great, fruitful German policy. It is from this point of view that the war aim of understanding with the East should be pursued with all our might and in all honesty. In any case, my Party expects that. It is a condition of our collaboration in the whole peace policy."

Herr Fehrenbach (Centre), said :

" . . . We also welcome this peace because it is supported by the unanimous will of nearly the whole of our Parliament, at all events of all the great parties, and this gives me the hope that the many and partly unnecessary and repugnant disputes concerning war and peace aims will gradually prove to be entirely unnecessary.

" We are glad that the young Ukrainian nation has been the first to accept the German hand of peace that has been offered honestly and sincerely . . . The Ukraine, with which we are concluding this Peace Treaty, is the richest and most blessed country in Russia. It is true that, through the fact that we are establishing regular relations with the Ukraine, we are hoping to obtain grain and other foodstuffs from that country in the near future, in the course of this year. But to represent the peace, the way it has happened, as a 'Bread peace,' and to say that in connection with this peace we have traded away the Cholm country<sup>1</sup> for the sake of grain—these are ugly one-sided allegations.

" We hope that this peace with the Ukraine will be the precursor of further peace treaties. Our peace negotiators are accompanied by our best wishes now on their way down to Russia. We also hope, despite everything that has happened in Brest Litovsk and since, for peace farther north, with Greater Russia. We further hope that we shall enter into really amicable relations with Lithuania, which is evidently friendly disposed towards us, and we also hope that we shall witness in Courland, Latvia, and Estonia the formation of political structures, freely and of their own accord, free in their own independence, but with a friendly attitude towards our German Reich. And so, in the face of all the hypocritical incitements against us from the West, let us show that it is we who protect and strengthen the small nations, without any aims of conquest . . ."

Count von Westarp (Conservative), said :

" . . . Those who have the fostering of good relations eastwards at heart, will be able to join with State Secretary von Kuehlmann in hoping that the Peace Treaty with the Ukraine is also the first step towards a restoration of good relations between ourselves and the Greater Russian Empire as a whole."

Dr Mayer-Kaufbeuren from the Centre Party, said :

" . . . We welcome this peace of Germany with the Ukraine as the first fruit of the incomparable deeds of heroism of our Army, but also of the Reich Government and the Reichstag majority. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> A Polish Province.

Herr Fischbeck (Progressive People's Party), said :

"My friends have also indicated, already at the first reading, that they would approve of this first peace treaty. We consider it our duty to express our thanks to the men who have participated in the accomplishment of this work, to State Secretary von Kuehlmann and the others.

"Some of these gentlemen have already left, in order to continue the work of peace thus begun, in order to arrive at a settlement with Rumania as well. The fact that the possibility for such negotiations has opened, is partly due to our negotiators, who have succeeded in finally bringing home this Peace Treaty with the Ukraine out of the chaos of the negotiations in Brest Litovsk, and, if at last, even Messrs. Trotsky and Lenin are willing to come round, that is partly ascribable to the fact that their calculations have been frustrated by the work of our diplomats in Brest Litovsk. They have come round because, thanks to the energetic action of our Supreme Command . . . they were made to realise that Germany will still not allow herself to be mocked at. . . ."

Dr Stresemann (National Liberal) declared :

"We are now confronted with the first peace. We hope that the others will follow. In the West our hand of peace has reached out into empty air. The responsibility for the enormous blood sacrifices that may still be necessary there falls on our enemies. If we have to continue the struggle, then the hearts of the people will be where the flags of the country are flying, and we hope and pray for a German victory that will bring us the peace that has been denied to us.

"We thank Secretary of State von Kuehlmann and his collaborators," continued Stresemann, "for the tenacity and diplomatic skill with which they represented our German interests at the negotiations in Brest. We also thank them for the sense of duty with which they overcame themselves sufficiently to sit down at the same table with a Radek. . . ."

"... I would like to say something concerning the negotiations that have created the conditions for our future relations with Russia. Difficulties spring from the most varied quarters. When Herr von Kuehlmann first went to Brest, the *Vorwaerts* wrote an article ending with the words: 'Our negotiators must bring peace back with them; they are answerable to us for that.' I think that it does not strengthen the position of our negotiators if they are given this wish for their journey.

"Very different is the attitude of a category of people whose point of view is fundamentally different from that of the Reich Government—and I am not referring to circles that can be delimited on a party political basis. . . . I mean the entire school of politicians who hold that we ought to try to arrive at a treaty of friendship with a great, unified, self-contained Russia, which would afford us the possibility, starting from this treaty, of arriving at a Continental Alliance against Britain, and thereby striking the great blow against Britain that would give us in relation to her the freedom we want to achieve in this world war. The people in question are Professor Hoetzsch, Herr Georg

Bernhard, and also a group of prominent Socialists who have actually expressed this idea in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* . . .

"I do not understand how the German Government can be in any way reproached for having at the right moment played out the Ukraine against Trotsky and having thereby alone brought us Herr Trotsky's present offer. . . . We no longer have a great, united, homogeneous Russia . . . after all, we must remember that it was we ourselves who began, through the policy initiated on November 5, 1916<sup>1</sup> to shake this structure of the great, unified Russia.

"There is just as little certainty that this Russia has any intention to be persuaded into a Continental Alliance against Britain. . . . The adherents of this current believe that a German-Russian alliance would automatically entail an alliance with France. . . . It may be that the alliance with Britain will leave behind many a thorn in France, but every one of us must see that the antagonism, the hatred that has been fostered against Germany for decades, will remain the decisive factor of French policy. . . . For this reason I consider it wrong to reproach our Government for having prepared the way for the separate negotiations with the Ukrainians and brought the present treaty into being.

" . . . I now come to the question of the strategic demarcation of frontiers, the possible allocation of Polish territories to Germany and Prussia. My political friends are of the opinion that in the question of the strategic safeguarding of frontiers decisive importance should be attached to the voice of the Supreme Command. From our own national point of view we are not at all interested in having Polish territory added to Germany in any way. . . . It will be a matter for our military leaders to examine the question to what extent strategic security of our frontiers is a vital necessity to Germany. If so, we shall accept it because there is a national need for it.

" . . . I come to the question of the importance of the Ukrainian Treaty, and would like to point out that the economic pulse of greater Russia has been in the Ukraine in the past, and will probably remain there. Of Russia's grain exports, 39 per cent fell to the Ukraine, of her sugar exports 80 per cent, of Russia's entire coal production, amounting to 1,900,000 puds,<sup>2</sup> 1,300,000 fell to the Ukraine, and 325,000,000 puds of an iron production of 500,000,000 puds

"It is a mighty economic body of the Russian empire that has detached itself and wants to enter into economic relations with us. I am of the opinion that the excitement that has arisen in Petersburg over these negotiations, that the attempt to intervene in this development by force of arms, springs, above all else, from the idea that Russia cannot live at all without the Ukraine. . . .

"The question poses itself whether we should look on with folded arms while those Germans of the Baltic countries who, despite all the persecution, all the misery and all the difficulties have stuck to the German language and German culture, are being slaughtered. . . . It would be

<sup>1</sup> Joint Declaration of the two Emperors, proclaiming the independence of the Russian part of Poland

<sup>2</sup> 1 pud equals 16.38 kg. The figures quoted in the Reichstag minutes in respect of coal production should probably read 190 and 130 million puds.

incomprehensible if we, who have exerted ourselves for the freedom of ethnically foreign nations, failed to let our hearts beat first of all for the Balts, who are our own flesh and blood. . . . If to-day you go to Riga or Mitau, you will be confronted by such a pure, unadulterated Germanism that sometimes you would wish it could *be united* with Germany. . . . When, in addition to Courland, we have also occupied Latvia and Estonia, then I hope that the day will also come 'when this old German soil will lie under the protection of the great Reich.' . . . This does not mean annexation of these territories. But it does mean a free Baltic in close dependence on Germany, under our military, moral, political, and cultural protection. I think it would be one of the finest aims of this world war if we could merge this piece of loyal Germanism with ourselves as intimately as it desires to be merged. We shall be able to do this all the more, without violating any nation, because people who are familiar with the country have said to me. 'If you now march into Estonia and Latvia and free the country of the chaos of anarchy, then you may allow the freest plebiscite everywhere, and you will only receive a single vote from Estonians and Latvians also—for union with Germany.'

"The Baltic Germans have completely preserved their German culture. a shining example for the Americanized grandchildren of German grandfathers. The war will not be finished by the sword of criticism, but by the criticism of the sword. World peace will be achieved through a German victory .

"I hope that the Ukrainian peace that is being debated to-day will be the first link in the chain of peace treaties with individual countries that will gradually bring world peace nearer. Until then the sword will speak, besides diplomacy."

(At this point there is an interpolation in the Minutes of the debate: Stormy applause and clapping on the Right, among the National Liberals and in the public galleries.)

Dr Cohn (Nordhausen) Independent Socialist, stated on behalf of his friends that they would not give their consent to the Treaty submitted for approval:

"We cannot give our approval to this Treaty because in the first place it is an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of other peoples—the Russian peoples—against the will of considerable majorities of these peoples. We can also not approve of this Treaty because it plays out one people against another—the Russians against the Ukrainians—for purposes that are foreign to both peoples. The effect of this peace is bound to be, not only incitement of these two peoples against each other, but also incitement of the profoundest hostility in the East against the German people and the Central European States.

" . . . It appears to me, from many publications that have appeared in the German language, and were written by people who call themselves good Germans, that the Poles are absolutely right when they complain

of the intentions reflected by this Treaty and the policy that lies behind it, namely, to rob them of large and important parts of their country<sup>1</sup> Among other things, I have before me a Memorandum from the Chamber of Commerce of the Government District of Oppeln That body handed the Memorandum to the Reich Chancellor in July, 1917, and explains therein that German interests demand, in the first place, the attachment of Poland to Germany

" 'The economic attachment of an internally independent Poland, and particularly of the South-Western Ukraine, in some politico-legal form to the German Reich, represents the fundamentally most desirable solution of the Polish question from the German point of view ' "

That is what the Memorandum says :

" It is peculiar that the strategic safeguards are to comprise just the parts of Poland that are economically most valuable, and it is still more peculiar that the strategic safeguard, consisting of the coal and ore districts of Poland, should be demanded by the Chamber of Commerce of the Upper Silesian territory, which competes with Poland in this field . It says here .

" ' The occurrence of coal iron, lead and zinc ore in these territories is of such far-reaching importance to our district, that we must put this point—namely, the detachment of the four districts of Vielun, Czenstochau, Olkusz, and Bendzin—forward again and again By these, the raw materials that are most important for German war and peace economy, would be substantially increased for Upper Silesia These materials are naturally also of a certain importance to Poland, but they are very much more important to us and they should be in German hands ' "

" Why, this is the logic of the bandit, who says to a lady . ' Your handbag is very important to you, but it is still more important to me on account of its contents ' "

" . . . The peace with the Ukraine is only a pretext to open hostilities against Russia again, and the aim of this new campaign is to annex these countries Lithuania, Courland, Estonia, and Latvia, either quite openly, or under a hypocritical mask, the pretext being the safeguard of German interests and that we must secure our frontiers . "

A division on the Peace Treaty with the Ukraine now followed. The Treaty was approved by an overwhelming majority. All Parties which voted in July 1917 for the Peace Resolution, including the Social Democrats, voted in favour. Only the representatives of the Polish Minority and the Independent Social Democrats voted against it.

<sup>1</sup> The Chelm Province was given by the German-Ukrainian Peace Treaty to the Ukrainian Republic. See footnote, page 148.

*Colonisation of the East*

At this period the colonisation of the East was, of course, more extensively discussed in Germany. More living space for German agriculture was the catch-word. At the meeting of the Agricultural Federation,<sup>1</sup> the Chairman, Dr Roesicke, said :

“ . . . We repudiate the people who are endeavouring to sow dissensions between the big and small men in the ranks of the farmers. They are our enemies. It is demanded that our warriors should be settled. But then we must have land to settle them on. The land is at our door in the East. But we find that the Peace Resolution of July 19 is against it, and also the self-determination of the peoples. We need land for settlement, and our friends in Estonia are crying out for help. . . . ”

This point of view was more closely defined on April 9, at the Prussian Herrenhaus, by the Minister of Agriculture, Herr von Eisenhart, who, on behalf of the Prussian Government, said :

“ The fixing of our eastern frontier is undoubtedly of very considerable importance, in the first place from the point of view of Prussian interests. Prussia is entitled to demand that the agreement concerning this frontier should adequately take into account her military interests, even if we must in this connection resign ourselves to the evil that the number of Poles who cannot adapt their own wishes to those of the Prussian State will be increased in Prussia. . . . ”

And Kammerherr<sup>2</sup> von Oldenburg-Januschau, who a few years later was to become notorious in connection with the scandal round Hindenburg, declared :

“ . . . This war is a struggle for world domination, and hard as it is to go on with it, it must be fought out to a victorious finish and the victory must be exploited, unless we are to sow the seed of death for our Fatherland. . . . If we do not obtain a war indemnity, we would have to secure a grant of ten thousand millions per annum from the Reichstag. The German heart is not in the Wilhelmstrasse, nor in the Reichstag, but at General Headquarters. The Reich is not a Reich of renunciation, but one of power and glory in all eternity. (Stormy applause.) ”

*Mr A. Balfour on German Militarism*

On February 27, 1918, in the House of Commons, Mr Holt suggested that Germany's acceptance of the first four of President Wilson's Fourteen Points presented a possibility of general peace. In reply, the

<sup>1</sup> 25th General Meeting, February 19, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., Lord-in-Waiting

Foreign Secretary, Mr Arthur Balfour, exposed the true nature of the Reich's "pacific" intentions in a manner that might well serve as a commentary on the Reichstag debate. Here is an extract from the reply :

"... We know what a German always does mean when he talks of economic freedom and frontier security. He always means imposing some commercial trammels upon a weaker neighbour, or appropriating some of his territory in order to strengthen his own frontier. I am perfectly certain that if the Hon. Gentleman will take the trouble to look back through the German speculations on the question of Belgium, of which the German papers have been full ever since the beginning of the war, he will see, and he will always see, that by the phrase used by Count Hertling as to making use of Belgium as a jumping off ground for enemy machinations, they always have in their minds the restoring of a Belgium which shall be subject to Germany by various new conditions, either territorial or commercial or military, which will prevent her having an independent place among the nations of Europe, of which Germany has tried to deprive her, but which Germany and ourselves are pledged to preserve for her.

"I now turn from this particular example of the method by which Count Hertling carries out the general policy to the four principles<sup>1</sup> on which he asks my specific opinion. What we have got to consider is how far the lip service which Count Hertling pays to these four principles is really exemplified by German practice. The first one deals with 'the principle of essential justice.' Count Hertling gives warm approval to that doctrine and quotes St Augustine in its favour. Does the Hon. Gentleman think that essential justice is the leading principle of German foreign or military policy? Just consider the frame of mind which Count Hertling shows about Alsace-Lorraine. I want to be perfectly fair. It is conceivable that a German would take a different view from that which is taken by the French, the British, the Italians, and the Americans on the subject of Alsace-Lorraine, but I cannot imagine a man who is discussing the principles of essential justice saying, 'There is no Alsace-Lorraine question, Alsace Lorraine is so obviously, so plainly out of Court that we refuse even to consider it when the Council of Peace comes.' This is the declaration made by this advocate of peace. . . .

"Take the second great principle : 'Peoples and provinces shall not be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels.' We have got quite recently an exact specimen of how Count Hertling interprets in practice the principle of which he approves so glibly in theory. When they settled the boundaries of the Ukraine, they handed over a portion of undoubted Polish territory to the new Republic. . . . Then we come to the third principle, and here Count Hertling, I observe, makes an historical excursion or a semi-historical excursion, into history and says, with, I think, a great measure of truth and justice, that the Balance of Power is more or less an antiquated doctrine. He goes further when he observes that England has been the great upholder of the doctrine of the Balance of Power and that England

<sup>1</sup> First four points of President Wilson.

has always used it for the purpose of aggrandisement. These are the exact words 'It is only another expression for England's domination.' That is a profoundly unhistorical method of looking at the question. This country has fought once, twice, thrice for the Balance of Power because it was only by so fighting that Europe could be saved from the domination of one over-bearing nation. It is because we fought for the Balance of Power that we saved Frederick the Great from destruction and the Prussian State of that day—it is because we fought for the Balance of Power that we enabled Prussia to recover that independence which had been squeezed out of her by the triumphant armies of Napoleon . .

"I say that until German militarism is a thing of the past, until that ideal is reached for which we all long, in which there shall be an International Court, armed with executive power, so that the weak may be as safe as the strong—until that time comes it will never be possible to ignore the principle of action which underlies the struggle for the Balance of Power in which our forefathers were engaged. If Count Hertling really wants to render the Balance of Power an antiquated ideal of international statesmen, he must induce his countrymen to give up that policy of ambitious domination which overshadows the world at this moment, which is the real enemy . ."

### *The Naumann-Jaeckh-Bosch Report*

However, Germany had many reasons to believe that the chances of winning the war against the Western Allies had evaporated. Even von Hindenburg and Ludendorff had already in the beginning of 1918, in a series of reports, repeatedly hinted at a transport crisis, and, among other things, at a shortage of locomotives. At the same period (February 11, 1918) a group headed by Deputy F. Naumann, Professor Ernst Jaeckh and the well-known industrialist Dr Robert Bosch, had sent a detailed report to General Ludendorff stating that:

"The events of the past few weeks have shown that our home front, which has hitherto been entirely solid, is no longer entirely proof against shocks. We shall not enter into the reasons here. The fact is that graver and ever more deplorable events have only been prevented by the circumstance that the organised, thoughtful older workers have stuck to their task"

In view of this, they posed the question: What is to be done? And they went on to argue that:

"... the present mood of the broad masses as regards war questions is dominated above all by two factors. the question as to the further duration of the war, and the question of the necessity and significance of the coming offensive in the West. It is not believed that the U-boat



war will lead to a rapid conclusion of the war. All that is expected from its continuance is a weakening of the American attack and, at best, the postponement of America's effective entry into the war until 1919."

The authors drew from this the conclusion that :

"Central Europe is being increasingly undermined in the economic sense, internally as well, with every month that the war continues, because its economic and financial resources for the future are thereby made to vanish to an increasing extent. The prerequisite of the future continuance of Central Europe lies in the economic and financial efficiency of its leading State, Germany, after the war. If this efficiency declines, then after the war Turkey, Bulgaria, and finally also Austro-Hungary will become the economic booty of America without a stroke of the sword. She will then get these countries into her hands in the financial and economic sense as well. The whole of our past political gains from the war would be destroyed. . . "

The authors added that Germany was faced with two alternatives :

1. Either the peace parties in England succeed, on the basis of our unequivocal declaration concerning Belgium, in overthrowing the war Government and replacing it with a peace Government

2. Or Lloyd George's war Government succeeds once more in forming a new chauvinistic Government against the will of the people.

"Both alternatives are favourable to ourselves," concluded the Herren Naumann, Jaechh, etc. Unfortunately for themselves, they forgot that Great Britain possessed a public opinion.

### *Ultimatum to Russia*

Meanwhile, the Germans had without difficulty occupied the Baltic countries and the Ukraine. On February 22, an ultimatum was sent to the Russian Government demanding the immediate acceptance, without discussion, of the principles of peace laid down by the Central Powers. The Russian Government had no alternative but to agree to the terms of the ultimatum and resume negotiations. The terms of the ultimatum were subsequently communicated to the Reichstag by Baron von Bussche-Haddenhausen, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who said :

"The wish has been expressed from various quarters that the terms put by us to Russia and accepted by her should be published. I venture to submit the text of this ultimatum to you

"Germany is prepared to resume peace negotiations with Russia on the following terms :

" 1 The German Reich and Russia declare the cessation of the state of war. Both nations are determined henceforth to live in peace and amity with each other.

" 2 The territories lying to the west of the line communicated to the Russian representatives at Brest Litovsk and formerly belonging to the Russian Empire, will cease to be subject to Russian territorial sovereignty. . . No obligations of any kind towards Russia will arise for these territories from that fact that they formerly belonged to her. Russia renounces all interference in the internal affairs of these territories. Germany and Austria-Hungary intend to decide the future destiny of these territories in agreement with their inhabitants.

" Germany is prepared to evacuate the territory lying to the east of the aforesaid line as soon as the general peace has been concluded, except as otherwise provided in article 3.

" 3. Latvia and Estonia will be forthwith evacuated by Russian troops and the Red Guard and occupied by German police, until security is guaranteed by national institutions and the political order is established. All loyal inhabitants under arrest for political reasons are to be released forthwith.

" 4 Russia will conclude Peace with the Ukrainian People's Republic immediately. The Ukraine and Finland will be cleared of Russian troops and Red Guards without any delay.

" 5 Russia will do everything in her power to secure the early restoration of the East Anatolian provinces to Turkey in good order, and recognises the abolition of the Turkish capitulations.

" 6 (a) The Russian Army, including the units formed by the present Government, are to be demobilised forthwith.

" (b). The Russian warships in the Black Sea, the Baltic and the Arctic Ocean are either to be transferred to Russian ports and left there until the conclusion of the general peace, or to be disarmed forthwith. Warships of the Entente within the Russian sphere of power are to be treated as Russian warships.

" Merchant shipping in the Black Sea and the Baltic will be resumed, as provided in the Armistice Agreement, minesweeping is to begin at once, the blockade area in the Arctic Ocean will continue until the conclusion of the general peace.

" 7. The German-Russian trade agreement of 1904 . . . comes into force again.

" 8. Legal matters will be settled on the basis of the decisions of a German-Russian Legal Commission. . . .

" 9. Russia undertakes to stop all official or officially sponsored agitation or propaganda against the four Allied Governments and their political and military institutions, such stoppage to include the territories occupied by the Central Powers.

" 10. The above terms must be accepted within forty-eight hours. Russian plenipotentiaries must go to Brest Litovsk without delay to sign the peace there within three days, and it must be ratified within a further two weeks."

In the course of the ensuing debate on February 25, 1918, Chancellor von Hertling said :

"Our aim from the outset was the defence of the Fatherland; our conduct of the war, even where the procedure has been aggressive, has been defensive as to aim. I stress this especially, in order to prevent any misunderstanding concerning our operations in the East.

"... It is a matter of establishing peace and order in the interests of the peace-loving population. We are not thinking of, say, settling in Estonia or Latvia, but only desire to live in amicable neighbourly relations after the war with the political structures arising there.

"Concerning Courland and Lithuania I need say nothing to-day. It is a matter of creating for the peoples of those countries organs of self-determination and self-administration, or of strengthening those that are already in process of development. We are looking forward calmly to further developments. However, the military operations in the East have produced a result that goes far beyond the original aim I mentioned just now.

"... We on our part replied by transmitting our peace terms in the form of an ultimatum. Yesterday—and this is the highly gratifying communication I have to make to you—news reached us that the Petersburg Government has accepted our peace terms and has sent representatives to Brest Litovsk for further negotiations.

"... Our terms have been accepted. The conclusion of peace must take place within the shortest time. Perhaps never in history has the Aristotelean dictum that we must decide on war for the sake of peace been so brilliantly confirmed. Our Army Command drew the sword in order to safeguard the fruits of our peace with the Ukraine. Peace with Russia will be the happy result. . . .

"Peace negotiations with Rumania began yesterday in Bucharest with the participation of the State Secretary of the Foreign Office. . . . He may now soon travel to Brest Litovsk."

Deputy Trimborn, Catholic Centre, defended the Government's Eastern policy :

"The whole world is fighting and thirsting for peace. . . . The first milestone on the path to freedom was our Kaiser's message of December 12, 1916. Its honest will to peace was corroborated by the Reichstag Resolution of July 19, 1917. We gathered the first fruits of the further laborious peace efforts (acceptance by the Russian Government of the German ultimatum) on February 22. . . . We are in agreement with the political aims of the military push in the Ukraine and the Eastern Provinces. No tendencies of conquest are being pursued. As regards the former border peoples of Russia, we respect their right of self-determination.

"The Reich Chancellor was fully justified yesterday when he placed the sole responsibility for the further bloodshed on our enemies, for, especially after the Resolution of July 19, 1917, and the further peace efforts that have taken place on the basis of it, we can say with a good conscience that we have done everything to save our people and the

whole of Europe from a fresh sea of blood. . . . In all probability, the war year of 1918 is going to be the year of decision. We look forward to it with firm confidence and glad hope. Our confidence in the Supreme Command is unshakable . . . .”

This time Scheidemann showed fight. The terms of the ultimatum were evidently calculated to frustrate the policy of the Socialists towards the Western Powers, and it was now or never for them to prove their disagreement. “We defended the country against Tsarism,” said Scheidemann, “and to-day we are fighting against the Entente’s aims of conquest, therefore we also oppose the dismemberment of Russia, the limitation of Belgian independence, and the annexation of Longwy-Briey.”

That was not the view of Dr Stresemann. In connection with the Baltic countries, he said :

“ . . . We . . . would nevertheless make it clear that entirely independent political structures are impossible here—they must seek support.

“ They cannot lead an isolated existence between the colossi of West and East. We hope that they will seek and find this support with us. The German occupation will have to continue for a long time, lest the anarchy we have just been combating should arise again. We shall have to safeguard the position of the Germans, a position consistent with their economic and cultural achievements. . . . We can await calmly the development that will take place there. I am firmly convinced that the population, which welcomed our troops with jubilation, will opt for us if we approach them.

“ In my view, Russia’s legitimate economic interests can be met by making the ports of Riga, Reval, and Windau available for her export trade as free ports ; this would render it possible for these ports to remain linked with their natural Russian hinterland.

“ As for the rest, the last few weeks have been very instructive as regards the question of the best method to attain peace. My colleague, Herr Scheidemann, said that we have made ourselves new enemies in the world through our push in the East. . . . Had we continued the negotiations, we should still be sitting with Herr Trotsky in Brest Litovsk. As it is, the advance has brought us peace in a few days and I think we should recognise this and not delude ourselves, particularly as regards the East, that if by resolutions made here in the Reichstag or through our Government’s acceptance of the entirely welcome initiative of His Holiness the Pope, we had agreed to a peace without indemnities and annexations, we should have had peace in the East.

“ In view of our situation as a whole, I should regard a fresh peace offer as an evil.

“ My chief objection is against the detachment of the Belgian question from the whole complex of the question of peace. It is precisely if

Belgium is not to be annexed that Belgium is the best dead pledge we hold, notably as regards England. The restoration of Belgium before we conclude peace with England seems to me an utter political and diplomatic impossibility . . ."

After referring to Rumania and the colonies, Stresemann, in conclusion, reverted to Russia :

"There is a great difference between the first set of terms at Brest-Litovsk and the ultimatum that we have now presented, and the blame for this change rests with those who refused to come to an agreement with Germany and who, consequently, must now feel her power. We are just as free to choose between understanding and the exploitation of victory in the case of the West, and I hope that these eight or fourteen days that have elapsed between the first set of peace terms in Brest-Litovsk and the second set, may also have an educational effect in that direction . . ."

Dr Solf, State Secretary of the Reich Colonial Office, replied for the Government :

" . . . On the German side it was never left in doubt that both the German Government and the German people had adopted the standpoint that we want our colonies back, all of them, those in Africa as well as those in the South Seas. But on the part of our enemies this desirable clarity has been lacking. . . Just as Lloyd George wants to destroy Germany as a Continental Power, so General Smuts wants to destroy Germany as a Colonial Power. The new element lies in the fact that the General does not, as formerly, place humanitarian aims and objects into the foreground, but heads his statements solely with a crassly imperialistic attitude: 'The destruction of Germany as a Colonial Power is necessary for the security of the British World Empire.' "

In this debate Independent Socialist Haase made a long speech attacking the previous speakers. We quote the following passage :

"The German ultimatum to the Russian Government will go down in history as a document of an exorbitant policy of violence and annexation. We have been declaiming again and again that we would be guided in all peace negotiations by the Reichstag Resolution of July, 1917, and by the Government's reply to the Pope's Note. Does anyone really dare to assert that the ultimatum to Russia is really in accordance with these announcements? If that is the case, then this proves that the Centre block is powerless in all decisive questions substantially determining the future of our people . . . Herr Trunborn on behalf of the Centre, and Herr Wiemer speaking expressly on behalf of the Progressive People's Party, have approved of the ultimatum to Russia. This shows what we must think of the declaration that we have no aims of conquest. In actual fact, Reich Chancellor Count von Hertling is the signboard of the almighty military party. . ."

*Peace Treaty with Russia*

After Russia's acceptance of the German ultimatum, the negotiations at Brest Litovsk, resumed towards the end of February, were nothing but a formality. The Russian delegation, this time headed by G. Sokolnikov in place of Trotsky, signed the Peace Treaty on March 3, 1918. The Central Powers had prevailed, imposing a "Diktat" on the then completely powerless Russia. Under the Treaty, Russia was to cede nearly a quarter of the total area of European Russia, together with more than a third of its total population. This amounted to nearly 1,000,000 square miles, and a population of 64,000,000. What a departure from the "pledges" of the Peace Resolution, which proclaimed the principle of a peace without indemnities and annexations! It is enlightening and therefore not superfluous to look a little closer into the provisions of the Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some of its main provisions :

"ARTICLE 3.

"The territories lying to the west of the line agreed upon by the contracting parties, which formerly belonged to Russia, will no longer be subject to Russian sovereignty, the line agreed upon is traced on the map submitted as an essential part of this Peace Treaty (Schedule I). The exact demarcation of the line will be effected by a Russo-German Commission

"No obligations whatever towards Russia shall devolve upon the territories referred to from the fact that they formerly belonged to Russia.

"Russia refrains from all interference in the internal relations of these territories. Germany and Austro-Hungary intend to determine the future status of these territories in agreement with the population thereof.

"ARTICLE 4

"As soon as general peace is concluded and Russian demobilisation is carried out completely, Germany will evacuate the territory lying to the east of the line defined in paragraph 1 of Article 3, in so far as Article 6 does not determine otherwise

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the principal Treaty of March 3, signed by the Central Powers on the one hand and Russia on the other, we must also mention the supplementary German-Russian Agreement which was signed on August 27, 1918, by Secretary of State Admiral von Hintze and M. Adolf Joffe, diplomatic representative of the Soviets

"Russia will do all within her power to ensure the immediate evacuation of the provinces of Eastern Anatolia and their lawful return to Turkey.

"The districts of Kedahan, Kars, and Batum will likewise and without delay be cleared of Russian troops. Russia will not interfere in the reorganization of the national and international relations of these districts, but leave it to the population of these districts to carry out this reorganisation in agreement with the neighbouring States, especially Turkey.

"ARTICLE 5.

"... Russia will, without delay, carry out the full demobilization of her army, inclusive of those units recently organised by the present Government.

"Furthermore, Russia will either bring her warships into Russian ports and there detain them until the day of the conclusion of a general peace, or disarm them forthwith. Warships of the States which continue in a state of war with the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance, in so far as they are within Russian sovereignty, will be treated as Russian warships.

"ARTICLE 6.

"Russia undertakes to conclude peace at once with the Ukrainian People's Republic and to recognise the Treaty of Peace between that State and the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance. The Ukrainian territory will be cleared of Russian troops and the Russian Red Guard without delay. Russia is to put an end to all agitation or propaganda against the Government or the public institutions of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

"Estonia and Latvia will likewise be cleared of Russian troops and the Russian Red Guard without delay. The eastern boundary of Estonia runs, in general, along the river Narva. The eastern boundary of Latvia crosses, in general, Lakes Peipus and Pskov, to the south-western corner of the latter, then across Lake Luban in the direction of Livenhof on the Dvina. Estonia and Latvia will be occupied by a German police force until security is ensured by proper national institutions and until order has been established. Russia will liberate at once all arrested or deported inhabitants of Estonia and Latvia and ensure the safe return of all deported Estonians and Latvians.

"Finland and the Aaland Islands will immediately be cleared of Russian troops and the Russian Red Guard, and the Finnish ports of the Russian fleet and Russian naval forces. So long as ice prevents the transfer of warships into Russian ports, only limited forces will remain on board the warships. Russia is to put an end to all agitation or propaganda against the Government or public institutions of Finland.

"The fortresses built on the Aaland Island are to be demolished as soon as possible. As regards the permanent non-fortification of these islands and their further treatment from the military and maritime point of view, a special agreement is to be concluded between Germany, Finland, Russia, and Sweden, it is understood that, upon Germany's request, still other countries bordering upon the Baltic Sea may also be consulted in this matter.

"The contracting parties mutually renounce compensation for their war expenditure, *i.e.* public expenditure for the conduct of the war, as well as compensation for war damage, *i.e.*, such damage as was caused to them and their nationals in the war zones by military measures, including all requisitions effected in enemy country."

*Reichstag Debate on Treaty with Russia*  
*March 18-22, 1918*

From March 18-22, 1918, the Reichstag debated the aforesaid Peace Treaty.<sup>1</sup> Here again the debate was instructive. It was introduced by a statement from Reich Chancellor Count von Hertling:

"... As you saw at a first glance, the Treaty contains no terms dishonouring to Russia, no oppressive indemnities, no forcible appropriation of Russian territory. The fact that a number of border States are seceding from the Russian political structure, is in accordance with the will of these countries, which has been recognised by Russia. With regard to them, our attitude is that these countries should, under the protection of the mighty German Reich, give themselves the political structure corresponding to their cultural development, mentality and circumstances, our own interests being naturally safeguarded.

"Developments have gone further in Courland. As is known, a deputation appointed by the National Council of Courland, the recognised body, appeared here a few days ago. It declared the severance of the country's past political links, expressing a wish for a close economic, military, and political link with Germany. . . .

"As regards Lithuania, that country, as you know, decided already last year to attach itself to the German Reich, by close military and economic links. We await calmly the further development of the political situation.

"As regards Livonia and Latvia, you will note, gentlemen, that these countries lie out of the boundary line agreed in the Treaty. But as provided in Article 6 of the Peace Treaty with Russia, they will be occupied by a German police force until security is ensured by national institutions and the political order has been established. . . .

"If, as I do not doubt, you approve the Treaty under discussion, I hope we shall soon be ready to conclude peace with Rumania as well, and then peace will have been restored along the whole of our Eastern Front. But . . . world peace has not arrived yet. We are prepared for everything. We are ready to make further heavy sacrifices. . . . But the responsibility for all the bloodshed will fall on the heads of those who, with frivolous stubbornness, refuse to hear the voice of peace "

The Treaty was attacked by Dr David, Socialist, who

<sup>1</sup> The Reichstag also dealt with the "Peace" Treaty with Finland, signed on March 7, 1918, whereby Germany recognised the independence of Finland and her separation from Russia.



feared that its general tenor might destroy the chances of a compromise peace with the West, but at the end of his speech he was already playing on muted strings :

"We view the Peace Treaty with Russia with very mixed feelings. We deplore the manner, the procedure whereby the peace was brought about at Brest-Litovsk. It was not the method of mutual understanding, it was clearly the method of a peace of violence .

". . . We are unable to vote for this Treaty, because we cannot bring it into harmony with the Resolution of July 19 . But, we are also unable to vote against the Treaty—for the simple reason that rejection would mean that we were authorising the military Command to resume hostilities.

"The mass of workers approve that we in the German Reichstag, so long as our country is in danger, so long as Germany does not get an honourable peace acceptable to us, should grant the means for the continued defence of our country . Had we followed the policy which Herr Haase recommended already on August 4, 1914, and into which he wanted to lead the majority of the party, then the war would probably have taken a different course . The consequences of the policy of Herr Haase and his friends would have led to the preservation of Tzarist despotism. This alone constitutes the severest condemnation of Herr Haase's policy before world history. We ourselves look forward calmly to the judgment of the mass of the people concerning our policy "

His colleague Scheidemann, said :

"We cannot express agreement either with the manner in which the Treaty came into being—with the exclusion of the Reichstag—or with substantial portions of its contents. But as this Treaty puts an end to the State of war in the East, we do not want to reject it, either. For these reasons we shall abstain from voting " <sup>1</sup>

Not so the few Independents, who spoke through the mouths of Ledebour and Haase.

Ledebour said :

". . . Besides, all these negotiations have only confirmed again my own and my friends' conviction that the conclusion of peace alone does not grant the peoples any real right of self-determination . What we are witnessing in this rapacious peace is the realisation of the idea of annexation. . . . This Peace Treaty turns the Resolution of July 19 into a scrap of paper . Herr Erzberger, I understand your pain . After all, you are the originator of this scrap of paper. I quite believe that you want to save it, but if you accept the Peace Treaty, you will be faced with the triumph of annexationism. . . "

Haase was of the same opinion :

"My group is filled with one feeling—a feeling of shame that despite all our assertions we have imposed on our neighbour nations a ruthless peace of the sword

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Majority Socialists agreed to the Treaty with Finland.

"The Pan-Germans have been jubilant for weeks and Herr Erzberger on February 27 warmly welcomed this Treaty, avowing that this Peace treaty lay within the framework of the Peace Resolution of July 19, 1917

"It was entirely in the same sense that Deputy Groeber, with much pettifogging argument, tried to show that no annexation was taking place through this Peace Treaty. What do Deputies Scheidemann, Ebert, and David, who are among the makers of the Peace Resolution, say to the interpretation that is now placed on it by their bloc colleagues?

... The same game is being repeated here as in the case of the U-boat Resolution, which was signed (March 31, 1916) by Deputies Scheidemann and Ebert, together with Count von Westarp and Stresemann. In either case it was not Scheidemann and David who proved right, but the annexationists. ... The military party has scored an easy victory. And the military party, the war situation permitting, will in the future exploit its victory to the full.

"... Now the Herren David, Ebert, Fehrenbach, Fischbeck, Gothein, and their friends have tabled a Resolution allegedly designed to safeguard the right of self-determination of the Poles, Lithuanians and Courlanders<sup>1</sup>. This resolution does not contain even a grain of the democratic spirit. With this Resolution the military party can carry through anything it likes. In the whole of Poland the White Terror rages as never before. After the Resolution opposing the Ukrainian Peace Treaty, large numbers of people were arrested and taken to Lublin."

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of the Reichstag enthusiastically welcomed the Treaties with Russia and Finland. Stresemann, opening the debate, attacked Dr David, revealing that many eminent Socialists held contrary views and emphasising that Germany's power, which evoked the hostility of Britain, was already before the war greater than that of Russia, whose weakness was now causing her disintegration. Stresemann continued:

"Our whole policy since August 1, 1914, has been directed with a view to sparing the neutrals during the world war. British policy has been directed with a view to violating the neutrals in the interests of Britain.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the following Motion presented by twelve Deputies representing the Parties that had voted for the Peace Resolution.

"In ratifying the German-Russian Treaty, the Reichstag expresses the expectation—

"that in accordance with the Reich Chancellor's declaration of November 29, 1917, and with those of the German peace negotiators in Brest Litovsk, the right of self-determination of Poland, Lithuania and Courland will be taken into account, that immediate steps will be taken to begin the upbuilding of a national civil administration,

"that the former national representations will be placed on a broad basis,

"that the agreements with the German Reich desired by the present national representations will be ratified as soon as possible.

Berlin, March 21, 1918

Dr David, Ebert, Erzberger, Fehrenbach, Fischbeck, Gothein, Groeber, Hausmann, Naumann, Frh. von Rechenberg, Scheidemann, Dr Sudekum."

I cannot yet put it down as a fact or as a result of this world war that our policy of sparing the neutrals has extended the circle of our friends. Nor is it right to present it as a dogma that annexations or the detachment of territories creates hostility and hatred, while understanding and solicitude results in friendship. Look at Italy. Italy once ceded Savoy and Nice to France. After all, she owes her unity to the German Reich. This Italy is fighting with our enemies, by the side of France, the France that has taken away its territory . . ."

The future "Man of Locarno" then proceeded to oppose the right of small countries to independence and equality:

"... What spoils my pleasure over the present settlement of the question, however, is the disruption of the Baltic territory as a unit, which the settlement entails. If what has been done now should later produce the result that Courland, with Riga, enters into close relations with Germany, while Estonia and Livonia establish a certain amicable relation with Russia, then, consider this, you will have robbed Livonia of its historic capital.

"As regards the further development of Lithuania, we agree to recognise Lithuanian independence on condition that the desire of the Lithuanians for a military convention and a customs, monetary and postal union with Germany, communicated to us some time ago by a Lithuanian delegation, still remains. For to be candid, the idea of full independence for these peripheral countries seems to me to be purely theoretical and impracticable. . . ."

"... The whole development of world politics," Stresemann continued, "shows that we have not only great and powerful individual countries like Germany on the one hand and Britain and France on the other, but associations of States fighting against each other. For my colleague Naumann, Germany is already too small, his Fatherland must be bigger. He has presented to us the grandiose idea of 'Mitteleuropa' as the core of future economic and political endeavours, with the Anglo-Saxon States on the other side. . . I do not believe in Wilson's universal League of Nations, I think that after the peace it will burst like a soap bubble. Great and powerful complexes of nations with hundreds of millions of inhabitants, armies of millions of men and exports amounting to thousands of millions, will be confronting each other. In the circumstances such small fractional nationalities will not be able to exist in complete independence, without seeking to lean on one side or the other. Just as there is no independent Belgium in the sense that it gravitates towards one side or the other, so it is not possible to conceive of a completely independent Lithuania, Balticum or Poland without that proviso. . . ."

"... The renunciation of war indemnities, which has been greatly lauded in some quarters here, does not appear to me only in the shining light of the conciliation it will lead to, but, as a citizen, I also see it in the light of the colossal burdens to which Germany will be exposed if this struggle ends without war indemnities. . . ."

And in conclusion, Stresemann said :

" . . . The more clearly we express it that the whole weight of our future victories will lie on our enemies, the more, in my opinion, will it tend to shorten the war. We have covered a considerable distance towards peace. The Entente no longer has any possibility of beating us economically. Do they think they can beat us militarily, now that our position in the West has become better than it ever was? If the statesmen of the Entente wanted understanding, they ought to have taken advantage of the situation now, when the Reich Chancellor has offered them the hand of understanding. They are playing a wanton game with their misguided peoples. Let the example of Russia be a warning to them. Russia, which offered us the hand of understanding, could have obtained a good peace of understanding if she had not risked this peace through the arrogance of Trotsky. May this struggle bring us victory, but may it also bring the benefits of this victory for Germany's future."

But this was not all. Before the division, Stresemann went even further. The Treaty was not good enough for him ! It did not safeguard German interests sufficiently :

" We have already signified, at the first reading, that we agree to the Peace Treaty. We further agree to Resolution No. 1422<sup>1</sup> in the matter of the war indemnity . . . Objections have arisen among my political friends to the formulation of the Resolution of the majority parties.<sup>2</sup> These objections relate, in particular, to the second paragraph, which demands immediate steps to initiate the up-building of the political structure with a national civil administration. We have learned with satisfaction from the speech of Vice-Chancellor von Payer that the natural requirements will not be left out of account in this connection. We also rely on the fact that drafting cannot exclude the matter of frontier guarantees, since one of the chief speakers of the proposing party has acknowledged his adherence to the principle of frontier guarantees. On this basis we shall vote this Resolution. . . ."

This speech of Stresemann's is but little known. Those who later awarded this politician the Nobel Peace Prize, intending to honour him as a good European, would have done well to read it before they did so.

<sup>1</sup> This Reichstag Resolution, signed mostly by Junkers, as Count Westarp, Dr von Heydebrand de Laas, zu Puttlitz, Dr Kapp, Dr Roesicke, Count von Schwerin, von Winterfeldt, was as follows :

" The Reichstag should resolve to request the Reich Chancellor to make efforts to ensure that at future peace negotiations the principle of renunciation of war indemnities should be abandoned, and that, all according to the military situation, the payment of an indemnity should be stipulated, in order to obtain ample means to place the welfare of the returning warriors on a new basis : to develop adequately the pensions system for the war-injured and surviving dependents, to grant assistance to discharged warriors for the period of transition to peace economy, and compensation for economic losses incurred by them, and to create homesteads and settlements on a large scale for those who have taken part in the war "

<sup>2</sup> See page 165.

The Catholic Centre's attitude to the Peace Treaty with Russia is expressed in the following speech :

Deputy Groeber (Centre) :

"The manner in which this Russian Peace Treaty has come into being has evoked keen criticism on the Left of the House. It is objected above all that the Russian Peace Treaty does not contain a peace of understanding. Now, it is true that this Peace Treaty cannot be described as a peace of understanding in the real sense. But I think that this is not decisive as regards acceptance of the Treaty. From the practical point of view the question is : Is it or is it not possible to obtain a Peace Treaty like the present in any other way ? My answer is in the negative. For this reason I have to say on behalf of myself and my friends that we unanimously approve of the Treaty . . ."

The principal author of the Peace Resolution, Erzberger, stated :

" . . . I decidedly reject the interpretation of the first great Peace Treaty as an act of violence "

Then came the division. The Majority Socialists, not having the courage to oppose the dismemberment of Russia by Central Empires, merely abstained, and the Treaty was approved by an overwhelming majority, including all the bourgeois parties.

Lenin, in a long speech he made on March 14, 1918, accepted the Peace Treaty as a necessity imposed by circumstances :

"We shall know how to wait," he concluded, "till the international Socialist proletariat comes to our aid and we shall then start a second Socialist revolution on a world scale "

The Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was eighteen months later cancelled by the Versailles Treaty. On the Russian side a decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, dated November 13, 1918, rightly described the Brest-Litovsk peace as a treaty of violence and brigandage and declared it to be null and void.

### *German March Offensive in the West*

Germany, having thus more or less liquidated her military problems in Eastern Europe, was now in a position to concentrate her forces on the Western Front.

On March 21, 1918, Ludendorff launched a great offensive on the front between the rivers Scarpe and Oise, with about forty divisions penetrating the British defences. The southernmost sector of the British front was overrun,

and the Allied troops had to retire to the line of the Somme. On the 23rd and 24th, Paris was shelled by German long range guns. Nevertheless, the German onrush was soon checked at several points. General Foch, the new Allied Commander-in-Chief, was thenceforth to co-ordinate the operations of the Allied Armies on the Western Front.

A fortnight later, the Germans began a fresh offensive in Flanders, so as to take the greatest advantage possible of the blow delivered in the aforesaid offensive. But they were again held by the Allied troops.

*Reichstag Debate on U-boat Warfare, April 1918.*

It seems natural that at a time when military action could not attain decisive results, the problem of the U-boat war should have aroused new interest in the Reichstag. A debate on that subject took place on April 17-18.

Erzberger declared :

"Since the unrestricted U-boat war has been going on, no one has demanded that it should be stopped "

Stresemann said :

" . . The National Liberals have the credit of having first recognised the importance of the unrestricted U-boat war "

Indeed ! Finally, Count von Westarp declared on behalf of the Conservatives :

" that no change can now be made in connection with the U-boat war ; it must be continued as before and the only thing to be regretted is that it was not started earlier "

Does this not show a rather singular agreement between the Catholic peace-maker Erzberger, the future Nobel Prize winner Stresemann, and the Junker von Westarp ?

*Bucharest Peace Treaty with Rumania*

When the campaign against Russia was concluded, the Rumanian situation became grave. Rumania was also compelled to sign an Armistice.<sup>1</sup> On March 5, 1918, following an intimation from German Headquarters, the following preliminary declaration was signed by the representatives of the Central Powers and Rumania :

" . . I. Rumania cedes to the Allied Powers the Dobrudja as far as the Danube.

<sup>1</sup> At Focsani, December 9, 1917

<sup>2</sup> Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey

- II The Powers of the Quadruple-Alliance<sup>2</sup> shall provide for the maintenance of a trade route for Rumania, *via* Constantza, to the Black Sea
- III The frontier rectifications demanded by Austria-Hungary on the Austro-Hungarian-Rumanian frontier are accepted in principle by Rumania.
- IV. The economic measures corresponding to the situation are likewise conceded in principle.
- V The Rumanian Government undertakes to demobilise at least eight Divisions of the Rumanian Army The Control of the demobilisation will be undertaken jointly by the High Command of Field-Marshal von Mackensen's Army Group and the Rumanian Army Command. Rumanian troops must immediately evacuate the Austro-Hungarian territory occupied by them
- VI. The Rumanian Government undertakes to support with all its power the railway transport of troops of the Allied Powers through Moldavia and Bessarabia to Odessa
- VII Rumania undertakes immediately to dismiss officers of Powers which are at war with the Quadruple-Alliance who are still in Rumanian service. A safe conduct is assured to these officers by the Quadruple-Alliance.

This Treaty comes into operation immediately."

The Rumanian Government realised that the country was at the mercy of an enemy who allowed no discussion whatever. Eight divisions, out of a total of eighteen, were to be demobilised before Germany would consent to negotiate a Peace Treaty. Germany's satellites had to be satisfied by Rumania: Bulgaria was eager to achieve a "Greater Bulgaria" by the annexation of the Dobrudja, while the Austro-Hungarians claimed the surrender of the Carpathian Passes and, last but not least, the Reich itself demanded the very rich Rumanian oilfields and supplies of Rumanian corn for an unlimited period at a price to be fixed by Germany. Moreover, Germany's Allies were to share their spoils with her. By a condominium with Bulgaria over the most important part of the Dobrudja, Germany secured for herself the control of the Campina-Constanza pipe-line

In March 1918, Germany succeeded in imposing on King Ferdinand a puppet Government headed by M. Marghiloman.

The Peace Treaty was signed in Bucharest on May 7, 1918. The Kaiser took the opportunity to send telegrams

to Field Marshal von Hindenburg (who received the honorific distinction of having his name bestowed upon the main gateway of the Teutonic fortress of Marienburg), Count von Hertling and von Kuehlmann.

The Peace Treaty and the supplementary treaties stipulated the payment of a disguised war indemnity by Rumania, which on her part had to renounce reparations not only for war damage, but also for the requisitions made and contributions exacted by the German occupation authorities. In addition, Rumania was to indemnify the Germans for all damage suffered by them on Rumanian territory in consequence of the military measures of any of the belligerent Powers. This stipulation also applied to the losses which the Germans had suffered as shareholders of undertakings situated in Rumanian territory. Rumania was also asked to indemnify neutral nations for damage caused to them on Rumanian territory as a result of German military measures. Thus the Central Powers "magnanimously" refrained from exacting a cash indemnity from Rumania, but imposed it in kind by writing off their requisitions in Rumania, amounting to some 200 million dollars. The territorial losses of Rumania amounted to one-fifth of the whole area of the Kingdom. Rumania was compelled also to grant extensive rights to the German minority.

We now come to the Oil Agreement between Germany and Austria-Hungary on the one hand and Rumania on the other. This was also dated May 7, 1918, forming an integral part of the Main Peace Treaty. Under the Agreement an Oil-Field Lessee Co. (Oellaendereien Pachtgesellschaft m.b.H.) obtained exclusive rights of the most exorbitant character for thirty years with the option of renewing the contract for two equal periods. Twenty-five per cent. of the founders' shares were offered, according to Section I of this voluminous Agreement, to the Rumanian Government, which had the right to transfer its holding to private interests; Germany and Austria-Hungary assured their own control *via* preference shares of a fifty-fold voting value. Section IV provided for the establishment of an Oil Monopoly in Rumania. In brief, the Agreement placed the country's entire oil production at the disposal of the newly created company. As a matter of fact, before 1914



Germany had to import ninety-three per cent. of her mineral oil supplies from abroad, only seven per cent. being produced at home; experiments for the extraction of oil from coal had proved more or less a failure, while home produced benzol furnished no adequate substitute for petrol. Control of the Rumanian oil-fields enabled the "German-American Petrol Co." to be reconstructed on a new basis and combined with German world interests by the addition of Albert Ballin and a representative of Stinnes, the coal magnate, to the Board of Directors.<sup>1</sup> It must finally be recalled that two German banks—the Berlin Diskonto - Gesellschaft and Bleichroeder — acquired in Rumania collieries estimated to produce four-fifths of that country's coal.

The Central Empires secured for themselves the domination of the Danube and its unrestricted use, setting up a new Danube Commission, from which, of course, the Entente Powers were excluded. The economic control of Rumania was completed by detailed regulations compelling her to give, without reciprocity, the most-favoured-nation treatment to Germany and Austria-Hungary. Germans were further placed in a position to buy up Rumanian land at discretion. The 1905 Trade Agreement was to be renewed until 1930 in a form favourable to Germany. The Rumanian railway system and a shipbuilding yard on the Danube were to be controlled by Germany. The latter also secured until 1950 a monopoly of laying cables on the Rumanian coast. It should be noted that the value of Rumania's annual agricultural production amounted to 240,000,000 dollars. By a special agreement Germany stipulated that the surplus supplies of Rumanian corn and other food products were to be placed at the disposal of the Central Powers, for the first two years by a firm contract and for the following seven years by way of a year by year option. Germany acted on the assumption that for a number of years there would be a scarcity of food in Europe.

On May 16, 1918, the Allied representatives assembled at Jassy, where the Rumanian Government had moved in November, 1916, and drew up a series of observations on

<sup>1</sup> See the "*Times*" *History of the War*," Vol. XVII, p 55, 1918

the peace terms imposed on Rumania. In conclusion they said :

"Far from giving Rumania partial freedom, the present peace will complete her subjugation and her ruin; Germany will continue to occupy territories, even after the ratification, which, as we have seen, she can put off as long as she may wish, the navigation of the Danube, the posts and telegraphs, and the railway remain under German control, by the request of the Rumanian Government, a German delegate has been appointed to each Ministry War material and munitions are to be stored in the occupied territories and under the care of the German military authorities, finally, Rumania may only keep in being the forces necessary for policing her territory.

"... This treaty provides for the spoliation of the public lands, for the scarcely concealed annexation of the whole country, and, after the peace, for its barbarous exploitation, and for the draining of its resources to the profit of the conquerors, it turns Rumania into a veritable convict settlement, where the entire population is condemned to hard labour for the benefit of the conquerors. It is a fair example of a German peace We should consider it all the more closely, in as much as the German delegates informed the Rumanian delegates, who were appalled at being required to accept such conditions, that they would appreciate their moderation when they knew those which would be imposed on the Western Powers after the victory of the Central Empires."

On June 17, following a general election, the new Rumanian Chamber met for the first time, and in response to a speech from the Throne by King Ferdinand, ratified the Peace Treaty without delay. Politically the acceptance of the Peace Treaty was a necessity; from the sentimental point of view it seemed to the Rumanians less harsh, because the Central Powers had granted to Rumania the Russian province of Bessarabia.

#### *Reichstag Debate on the Rumanian Treaty*

On June 21, and the following days, the Rumanian problems, that is, the Treaty of Peace between the Central Powers and Rumania, together with a large number of subsidiary German-Rumanian Agreements, was discussed in the Reichstag. Deputy Groeber (Catholic Centre) said :

"This Peace Treaty is auspicious for us. It has brought us peace in the East and marks another stage towards world peace . . . Actually Rumania has fared not too badly for her disloyalty. Austria-Hungary, in view of its most unfavourable frontiers, had to be secured against future treacherous attacks. We may give complete approval to the treaties."

After talking about the territorial clauses of the Treaty in favour of Austria-Hungary (10,000 square kilometres) and Bulgaria (Southern Dobrudja), this representative of the Catholic Centre went on to deal with the war reparations :

" . . . Then there is the matter of reparations. The much debated problem of war reparations has been solved in the Rumanian Peace Treaty in such a manner that war costs, that is, State expenditure in connection with the conduct of the war, is waived, but reparations for war damage have been stipulated.

" . The Oil Agreement, above all, is important, because it guarantees a secure supply of Rumania's oil production, which is extremely important to us particularly from the military point of view and will remain so in the near future. Our war equipment is considerably strengthened by this provision.

" I further call attention to the agreement relating to Danubian shipping which enables us to exploit the Danube route to the full. The European-Danubian Commission is henceforth no longer to be composed of representatives of all sorts of countries, even France, Italy, and England, but only of those countries that have a share in the Danube and the European coast of the Black Sea.

" Finally I would like to stress that Rumania is obliged to deliver to us her surplus of foodstuffs and raw materials, which is of the utmost importance to us."

Dr Wiemer (Progressive People's Party) :

" The Treaty is sure to obtain a large majority.

" . . . My political friends welcome the conclusion of peace with Rumania, just as we honestly and gladly welcome the conclusion of any peace that will put an end to the bloody struggle of the nations and open the way for a resumption of the peaceful work of civilisation."

Count von Westarp (Conservative) said :

" . . . It is of importance to show the world that neither small nor big countries can violate their obligations of alliance towards Germany and her Allies with impunity, nor may they bow to British despotism with impunity, if this despotism requires that they should participate in the annihilation and encirclement of Germany and her Allies. In future such an attitude on the part of small or big nations may only be prevented with certainty if the world has been convinced by deeds that Germany, in addition to her military power, is also politically determined not to leave without the gravest consequences any such attacks against her right of existence. In the battles of arms it has become sufficiently manifest that the peoples of the world must say to themselves . ' he who eats from the Britisher's dish dies of it,' and in my view the peace treaties must also make it clear for a long time to come that those who thought it was right that they should submit to British despotism for the purpose of participating, in contemptible breach of loyalty, in the war of annihilation against us, were very ill-advised. The Peace Treaty must be measured by this standard. . . ."

Stresemann (National Liberal) who had grown in stature since the discussion of the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, also took part in the debate :

"We welcome the peace with the militarily and politically entirely collapsed Rumania as a world judgment in world history"

"... Is there anyone to-day who, after the overthrow of the whole of the East, would still doubt a German victory? ... Anyone who visualises the collapse of Rumania, this military collapse in three months, this complete political crash of the State that saw itself compelled to sue for peace, must feel that something like a world judgment in world history is taking place here ..."

He associated himself with Count von Westarp as regards the war indemnity to be demanded of Rumania :

"... Then there is the question of the war indemnity. In the debate on the Treaty of Brest Litovsk I said that, surely, it could not be contradicted from any part of this House that a war indemnity must be demanded from Rumania. If Germany receives an indemnity, then it is a matter of indifference to me what it is called, either in the case of the present Treaty or any further ones. Count Westarp will agree with me that in connection with the Peace of Bucharest one cannot talk about a peace without indemnities."

Herr Warmuth (Deutsche Fraktion) :

"We thank our troops for having achieved this peace for us. Above all else, permanent German influence in Rumania must be secured."

The only Reichstag Deputy to attack the Treaty was Ledebour :

"... Our objection to the Peace Treaty," he said, "is that it is not a peace of understanding, but one of violence."

He defended the small nations, without which there would be no peace in Europe ; then :

"... If we demand—and rightly, as I said—that German-speaking people in Rumania should have an unrestricted right to use their language in the home and in the school, then the same unrestricted language right must be granted to all non-German-speaking people in this country, unless the Reich Government wants to make a mockery of itself.

"... Now at least I know that the Pan-German mentality takes the attitude that Germanism is to be promoted with the whole power of the State against peoples of other languages. But if you act on this principle you are inflicting the gravest damage on Germanism. You are discrediting Germanism morally if you employ violent means to oppress other peoples. When the German Government on the one hand enforces equality for the German language in Rumania, but on the other, here at home imposes restrictions on the mother tongue of the Poles, the French-speaking Lorrainers and the Danes of the Northern Schleswig, and makes

it impossible for them to use their mother tongue in their schools, it is thereby conjuring up hatred of Germanism in the whole world.

"A few days ago it was reported to me that in the occupied Baltic territories, in Estonia, the German administration has eliminated the Estonian schools—nine-tenths of the population are Estonians—and introduced German as the language of instruction out of Germanisation mania

Of course, we are talking about Rumania. But this example is relevant to the question we are discussing because it shows how German policy is constantly running amok against its own principles, against its own German interests, by introducing such a policy of linguistic oppression in territories that do not even belong to it, for legally Estonia still belongs to the Russian State."

But Dr Stresemann had different ideas. This was how, in his view, the interests of humanity could best be served :

"Information we are receiving shows that a violent struggle is at present proceeding in India against British domination. We are unable to support this struggle of the Indians, which is carried on without arms, in a military, and scarcely even in a diplomatic sense, but we can emphasise that we want one thing. good personal relations with this old civilised people ; and that it is our wish that the freedom of the seas, for which we are fighting, should in the end enable all countries of the earth to bring us their raw materials and products across a free sea. That will be the case when India herself is in a position to decide in the matter. It will not be the case if the present form of domination continues. At all events, we are in full sympathy with the forces which in India are fighting for the idea of independence.

"I must say a few words here concerning the solution of the Polish problem. My colleague, Groeber, has posed the question. Do I not overestimate the value of the military guarantees? Are not the political guarantees in connection with good relations between Poland and Germany far better and more durable than it is possible for military guarantees to be? I agree with my colleague Groeber to this extent, that such guarantees may be more durable, better and stronger than guarantees of a military nature. But do conditions in Poland present a probability that there is a real guarantee that we can live side by side on such a basis? The past conduct of the Polish fraction in the Reichstag and the House of Deputies, and the attempts to have the German Ostmark question discussed as a question of international importance at world peace congresses, do not give my political friends a sufficient guarantee to think that future relations between Poland and Germany can be based solely on a formal paper friendship."

So far Stresemann. Thus, according to Stresemann, no independence for a European country with a millennial civilisation that is Germany's immediate neighbour ; but British possessions in Asia was quite a different matter.

The Peace Treaty with Rumania was ratified *en bloc* at the second and third readings, the Independents alone voting against it, and the Majority Socialists voting for it.

*The German May-June Offensive in the West.*

German official circles were already admitting that the U-boat campaign was not sufficient to end the war<sup>1</sup> and the Germans now concentrated their efforts on the military campaign. On May 27, a new German offensive was launched in the West, the main attack this time being made on a wide front between Soissons and Rheims and south of Ypres. The French were compelled to retreat across the Aisne. The Kaiser's armed forces were once again on the verge of victory. The Germans captured Soissons, claiming 25,000 prisoners. On the 31st they reached the Marne on a ten mile front from a point near Chateau-Thierry. But though they used about forty divisions they were again unable to secure a decision.

On June 1, 1918, the Germans renewed their drive, attempting a thrust towards Paris, but they were held. French, British, and American troops counter-attacked. At the same time, Germany's satellite No. 1—Austria-Hungary—was beginning to totter under the weight of Allied blows. On the 23rd the Austrians were heavily defeated on the Italian Front, re-crossing the river Piave in disorder.

Germany tried to raise the morale of her people by playing up the aims for which the Reich was fighting. German hatred of Britain reached its climax. On June 15, in a speech on the 30th anniversary of his accession, the Kaiser said :

" . . . I knew precisely what was at stake, for Britain's entry meant a world conflict, whether we wanted it or not. It is not a matter of a strategical campaign, but one of a struggle between two ideologies. Either the Prussian-German-Teutonic ideology—Justice, Freedom, Honour, and Morality—must prevail or the Anglo-Saxon which means succumbing to the idolatry of money. The peoples of the world would work as slaves for the Anglo-Saxon master race if subjugated by it."

<sup>1</sup> Statement by Admiral von Capelle in the Reichstag *Hauptausschuss* of April 17, 1918.

*Von Kuehlmann's Resignation*

In the Reichstag debate of June 21, 1918, von Kuehlmann, who, in contrast with the General Staff, had already foreseen the consequences of the war of attrition for Germany, said :

"Will the war, as far as it is humanly possible to calculate, last over the autumn and winter and beyond next year? . . . Thus in my opinion it is impossible to pick out any particular time of which it can be said that at that time the war will come to an end. The eye must seek for the political factors that might open up possibilities of peace. . . . We may adopt the precise words pronounced by Mr Asquith on May 16, if instead of the British Government we put the Imperial Government. 'The Imperial Government has not closed the door leading to an honourable peace, and if a proposal is made to us, no matter where it comes from, provided it is not vague, but rests on a firm foundation, then—of that I am certain—our Government will not turn a deaf ear to such proposal.' Let that be clear."

And

" . . . When the moment comes for the nations who are fighting each other to enter into an exchange of views, it will be one of the principal prerequisites that there should be a measure of confidence in mutual decency and chivalry. So long as any discussion is regarded by the others as a peace offensive, as a trap designed to sow discord between the Allies, so long as every attempt at a rapprochement is violently denounced by the opponents of such rapprochement in the various countries, one cannot see how an exchange of views leading to peace can be initiated. In view of the vast dimensions of this coalition war and of the number of Powers, including overseas Powers, engaged in it, an absolute end can scarcely be expected through a purely military decision, without such an exchange of views and without any diplomatic negotiations.

"Our situation on the battlefields, our vast reserves of military resources, and the internal situation and resolve, permit us to talk in this way. . . ."

The statement of the Secretary of State provoked a storm in the Reichstag. In particular, Count Westarp regarded it as a defeatist device. He said he had listened to Kuehlmann's speech with grave anxiety. The struggle with Britain had to be fought out to the bitter end of to be or not to be. It was a struggle against the idolatry of gold. Germany must safeguard herself and this demanded that the coast of Belgium and Flanders should be brought under German influence. The words of the Secretary of State would be interpreted as a fresh peace offer. An appeal to Britain's goodwill was useless. If our enemies

showed no will to negotiate, then they must be compelled to do so through our victory and this victory must be achieved.

The Chancellor, Count Hertling, in order to dissipate the bad impression created in the Reichstag by von Kuehlmann's statement, which was interpreted as a peace hint, and therefore as a sign of weakness, administered a rebuff to his collaborator, who was so popular in Germany only a few months ago during the Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest negotiations.

Von Kuehlmann's speech was further violently attacked by Stresemann, who said that the impression created by this passage was "crushing."

"... We very deeply deplore," he said, "that a sentence should have been pronounced that allows of the interpretation as though our military successes were not of a kind which alone present the possibility of attaining peace. For, Gentlemen, the statement that the military successes alone could not achieve peace lacks proof. It lacks proof in the face of the events recently experienced by the German people in connection with the peace in the East. What was it that brought peace in the East? Not the talk of statesmen, not diplomatic negotiations, not diplomatic notes, not Reichstag resolutions, but 'Ludendorff's hammer,' as Lloyd George has called it. The force of our army, the force of our power" (Stormy applause on the Right, Centre, and from the National Liberals)

Dealing with tangible guarantees (reale Sicherungen) Stresemann also had a word to say about Belgium:

"... It was with deep emotion that we read the announcement issued by the Council of Flanders at its plenary meeting of June 20, 1918, because it gives expression to the fact that considerable and important sections of the Belgian people are advocating Germany's right to figure in the Belgian question, and that the voice of agitation over that which they have suffered is overtopped by the voice of consanguinity with the Teutonic race"

The Independent Socialist Haase had the last word in the discussion. The only one to speak on behalf of his party, he put the matter in its true light:

"... Herr von Kuehlmann, whose days, after yesterday's speech, are numbered, does not know how to make at least a tolerably dignified exit. It was really painful to see how he submitted his apology to the Conservatives to-day. The victor is Count Westarp. It is the military party that rules in this country and it would be best if the true Regent of Germany, Ludendorff, became Reich Chancellor, in order to make matters perfectly clear. Herr von Kuehlmann contends that no plans for world domination have ever come up in Germany. Well, if up till



now he has overlooked the extensive literature on the subject, he will soon have ample leisure to study it."

In the minutes of the Reichstag proceedings of a few days later, June 26, 1918—we read: Deputy Noske (Social Democrat):

"... Herr Haase was of the opinion that the State Secretary has been repudiated by the Chancellor and that Herr von Kuehlmann was absolutely finished. The text of the Reich Chancellor's speech of yesterday does not allow of any such interpretation. Anyone who reads the State Secretary's speech of yesterday without prejudice cannot say, either, that it means submission to the will of the Conservatives and Annexationists."

To this Haase replied:

"... The efforts of Deputy Noske are quite understandable. The policy pursued by him and his friends since the outbreak of the war has suffered such a complete collapse, and this collapse became so very manifest yesterday, that it is humanly understandable if the people concerned would like to shut their eyes to it."

Haase was correct in saying that behind the attacks directed in the Reichstag against the unfortunate Kuehlmann was the powerful inspiration of Ludendorff, who still hoped to achieve a great victory on the Western Front. In a conflict such as this the High Command could be certain of success in advance; Kuehlmann had to go.

When the Reich Chancellor, on July 1, visited the General Headquarters at Spa, Fieldmarshal von Hindenburg demanded von Kuehlmann's head: the Supreme Command could no longer collaborate with him. The Supreme Command prevailed and the Chancellor did not succeed in persuading the Kaiser to keep the Foreign Secretary in Office for the present. When Kuehlmann tried to justify his action personally, the Kaiser received him with the words: "We must dissolve our marriage." Admiral von Hintze was nominated as von Kuehlmann's successor on July 9, 1918.<sup>1</sup>

### *The German July Offensive at Rheims*

In July, Ludendorff, realising that the time factor was working against him and in favour of American help to the Allies, launched a further attack at Rheims. But the French positions remained intact. Eventually, the great offensive resolved itself into several local operations.

<sup>1</sup> Johannes Hohlfield, *Geschichte des deutschen Reiches 1871-1926*, 2nd edition, Leipzig, 1926.

*The New War Loan.*

On July 13, the Reichstag granted another war loan. Herr Ebert, the man who a few months later was to become the symbol of the German "Revolution," said on behalf of the Social Democratic Party :

"We deeply regret that this terrible bloodshed is going on. The German people is filled with an honest desire for peace and the Government has again declared its readiness for peace. The enemy Governments, Parliaments and, unfortunately, also the representatives of Labour, have shown a lack of this preparedness for peace. They proclaim again and again a fight to the end. They are misleading their peoples as regards Germany's power of resistance. Since our enemies refuse a peace that would be honourable for all, we shall again sanction the means for the achievement of peace." (Applause throughout the House; hisses from the Independents.)

Curt Geyer, the Reichstag Deputy, speaking on behalf of the Independent Party, said :

"We will once more refuse the war loan demanded. This war was never a defensive war." (Stormy contradictions.) "It was and is an imperialist war. In this country it is not the Government, but the Imperialist Party that governs."

The debate was concluded and the loan approved.

*The Allied Counter-Offensive of July and August 1918.*

July 18 was the most important date in the history of the Great War, as it was the date of the first of the successive Allied offensives that led to the military defeat of Germany. It was then that General Foch launched a great offensive on a front of 40 kilometres round Soissons and Chateau-Thierry. On the 20th the line of the Marne was reached. The river Ourc was crossed. German prisoners were streaming in from all directions. The knell of German military greatness had been sounded. . . .

William II must have been sorely embarrassed when, on July 31, he had to make a new *Aufruf* to his subjects. Here is a piteous extract :

"... We have neglected nothing in an effort to bring peace back to a destroyed world ! But the voice of humanity is still not heard in the enemy camp. Whenever we spoke words of conciliation, we were met with mockery and hatred. Our enemies still do not want peace. They are shamelessly polluting the clean German name with ever new libels."

In August 1918, the Allied advance continued.

*Supplementary Treaty with Russia.*

In August, when even the German High Command had realised that all hope of a military victory on the Western Front must be abandoned, Germany was still maintaining its inexorable attitude towards Russia. On August 27, 1918, a supplementary treaty was concluded between the Reich and Russia, compelling the latter to make fresh political and economic concessions—that is to say, payment of a war indemnity, renunciation of Russian sovereignty over Estonia and Latvia, and delivery of 25 per cent. of the oil production of Baku. The only concession made in exchange to Russia was the evacuation of certain territories in Western and Southern Russia. It was all the more easy for the Reich to grant this concession as it was short of manpower. It was glad to reduce the numbers of the garrisons in the East and send part of these troops to the Western Front. Here are some details :

Germany was to evacuate the territory occupied by her east of Beresina, even before the conclusion of general peace, in proportion as Russia makes the cash payments stipulated in Article 2 of the Russo-German Financial Supplementary Agreement : further provisions as to this, particularly the fixing of the individual sectors to be evacuated, were left to the Commission referred to in Article 2, paragraph 1, of this Supplementary Treaty.

The contracting parties reserved the right to make further agreements with regard to the evacuation of the occupied territory west of the Beresina before the conclusion of general peace, according as Russia fulfils the remaining financial obligations undertaken by her.

" . . . ARTICLE 7.

" Russia, taking account of the conditions at present existing in Estonia and Latvia, renounces sovereignty over these regions, as well as all interference in their internal affairs. Their future destiny shall be decided in agreement with their inhabitants.

" No obligations of any kind towards Russia shall accrue to Estonia and Latvia through their former union with Russia.

" . . . ARTICLE 10

" With regard to Estonia, Livonia, Courland, and Lithuania agreements are to be concluded with Russia, among others, as to the following points :

" 1 With regard to the nationality of the former Russian inhabitants

of these territories, as to which they must in any case be allowed the right of option and departure

" 2 With regard to the return of the property in Russia belonging to subjects of these territories, particularly that belonging to publicly recognized societies, establishments, and institutions, as well as the property in these territories belonging to Russian subjects

" 3. With regard to an arrangement concerning the property of the communal districts cut up by the new frontiers

" 4. With regard to an arrangement concerning the archives and documents of the legal and administrative authorities, the legal and administrative trusts, and the register of births, marriages, deaths, etc

" 5. With regard to the regulation of the new frontiers.

" 6. With regard to the effect of the territorial alterations on the State treaties

#### " ARTICLE 12

" The parts of the occupied territory which do not belong to the districts referred to in the third Ukrainian proclamation of November 7, 1917,<sup>1</sup> shall be evacuated by the German forces at latest on the conclusion of the general peace, in so far as the peace between Russia and the Ukraine shall not have come into being before then.

" The evacuation of the Rostov-Voronezh railway line, as well as of the occupied territory east of it, and of a suitable frontier district west of it, including the town of Rostov, will follow as soon as this is demanded on the Russian side. Until the evacuation, Germany will permit the forwarding of grain and other goods for the Russian officials on the portions of the railway situated in the occupied territory; the same applies for the duration of the occupation to the portions of the Taganrog-Rostov and Taganrog-Kursk railway lines situated in the occupied territory.

" So long as the Donetsk Basin is occupied by German troops in accordance with Article 11 and Article 12, paragraph 1, Russia shall each month receive, from the coal extracted there, three times the tonnage of crude oil products supplied by her to Germany from the Baku district under Article 14, paragraph 2, and four times the tonnage of petrol comprised therein. In so far as the coal supply in the Donetsk Basin is not sufficient for this, or must be used for other purposes, it will be supplemented by German coal.

#### " ARTICLE 14.

" . . . Russia will do her utmost to further the production of crude oil and crude oil products in the Baku district, and will supply to Germany a quarter of the amount produced, or at least a monthly tonnage to be agreed upon. In so far as the quantities produced in the Baku district are not sufficient to supply this tonnage or must be used for other purposes, they will be supplemented by quantities produced elsewhere. The price will be reckoned by the price of the coal Russia is to be allowed to have in accordance with Article 12, paragraph 3, and moreover, by

<sup>1</sup> Old Style (November 20, New Style). These territories in Southern Russia were not included in the frontiers of the Ukrainian Republic.

the amount of goods to be supplied by Russia to Germany in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Russo-German Financial Agreement of this date."

We now come to the Supplementary Financial Agreement, concluded between the same signatories :

ARTICLE 2 stipulates :

"Russia shall pay Germany a sum of 6,000,000,000 marks as compensation for the loss to Germans caused by Russian measures, having regard to the corresponding Russian counter-claims and taking into account the value of the stores seized by German military forces after the conclusion of peace."

ARTICLE 3 provided :

"Paragraph 1. The Payment of the 6,000,000,000 marks mentioned in Article 2 shall be effected in the following manner. A sum of 1,500,000,000 marks shall be paid by the transfer of

245,564 kilogrammes of fine gold, and  
545,440,000 roubles in bank notes, consisting of  
363,628,000 roubles in notes of 50, 100 or 500 roubles, and  
181,812,000 roubles in notes of 250 or 1,000 roubles.

"The transfer shall be effected by five instalments, namely .

"1 Payable September 10, 1918, of—

42,860 kilogrammes of fine gold, and  
90,000,000 roubles in bank notes consisting of  
60,600,000 roubles in notes of 50, 100 or 500 roubles, and  
30,300,000 roubles in notes of 250 or 1,000 roubles.

"2. (1) Four amounts payable September 30, October 31, November 30, and December 31, 1918, each of 50,676 kilogrammes of fine gold, and 113,635,000 roubles in bank notes consisting of—

75,757,000 roubles in notes of 50, 100 or 500 roubles, and  
37,878,000 roubles in notes of 250 or 1,000 roubles

"The instalments shall be handed over to the representatives of the German Government at Orscha or Pskov. The representatives will, on receipt, furnish a provisional discharge, which, after the examination and checking of the gold and the notes, shall be replaced by a final discharge.

"(2) A sum of 1,000,000,000 marks shall be cancelled by the delivery of Russian commodities in accordance with the special agreement to be made in regard thereto. Commodities to the value of 50,000,000 marks in each case to be delivered by November 15 and December 31, 1918, to the value of 150,000,000 marks in each case by March 31, June 30, and December 31, 1919, and to the value of 300,000,000 marks by March 31, 1920. In so far as the deliveries cannot be effected within these periods, the amount lacking on each occasion shall be made up forthwith either in German imperial bank notes at their face value or in fine gold and rouble notes in the proportion of three to two at the rate of exchange then obtaining.

"(3) An amount of 2,500,000,000 marks shall be met by December 31, 1918, by handing over securities of a loan at 6 per cent. from January 1,

1919, with a sinking fund of  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., which will be taken up in Germany by the Russian Government to the nominal value of the sum mentioned, and the terms of which shall form an essential part of this agreement

"As security for the loan referred to in paragraph 1 preceding, specific national revenues shall be pledged, in particular the rental dues for certain economic concessions to be granted to Germans. The securities are to be settled in detail by a special agreement in such a form that the estimated income from them exceeds the yearly sum required for interest and sinking fund by at least 20 per cent.

"(4) With regard to the balance of 1,000,000,000 marks, in so far as its payment is not, in agreement with Germany, taken over by the Ukraine and Finland in accordance with their financial agreement with Russia, a special agreement shall be concluded."

The second part of this agreement deals with the surrender of bank deposits and credits.

*The Times* commented on the reaction produced by this supplementary agreement on the majority Socialists as follows :

"But the *Vorwaerts* knows its readers too well to protest against the German acquisition of £300,000,000. In a long article called "Russian Gold for Germany," the *Vorwaerts* positively gloats over the beauties of the German scheme."

The Agreement in question was not discussed by the Reichstag. The ratification took place on September 6, 1918. Of course it shared the fate of the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk following the German military collapse in the West.

On the morning of the Armistice of November 11, 1918, the German political parties immediately forgot about the "Diktat" imposed on Russia and Rumania, and they also hastened to forget their own approval of the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest. All this had to be quickly forgotten in order to be able to make vehement protests with a clear conscience against the Treaty of Versailles, which was from the outset branded as a "Diktat" and a "Carthaginian Peace." Stranger still is the fact that foreign public opinion similarly forgot about the events of Brest-Litovsk, accepting in good faith and with sentimental credulity the vociferations of the Weimarian parties—the same parties that, in the Imperial Reichstag, had glorified the military and diplomatic success of the Reich in dismembering Russia and crushing Rumania.

## CHAPTER V

### DEFEAT AND REVOLUTION

#### *The Allied Offensives—Consternation at German General Headquarters—Ludendorff Establishes a Parliamentary Regime*

AFTER the collapse of the Eastern Front, the German High Command decided to concentrate all its resources on the Western Front. Possessing a slight numerical superiority, the High Command intended to smash the Allied Front before the arrival of the American contingents. The successive offensives of March 21, April 9, May 27 and July 15, were checked. From July 18, the initiative passed to the Allies, and an Allied offensive was launched on August 8, 1918, its first result being a break-through at Amiens. "A day of mourning for the German Army," wrote Ludendorff. "Our first great disaster," exclaimed von Hindenburg.

Ludendorff, in his war memoirs, gives some interesting sidelights on the state of mind of the German Armies beaten on August 8, showing that they had succumbed to an irremediable defeatism :

"The report of the staff officer I had sent to the battlefield as to the condition of those divisions which had met the first shock of the attack on the 8th perturbed me deeply. I summoned divisional commanders and officers from the line to Avesnes to discuss events with them in detail. I was told of deeds of glorious valour, but also of behaviour which, I openly confess, I should not have thought possible in the German Army ; whole bodies of our men had surrendered to single troopers, or isolated squadrons. Retiring troops, meeting a fresh division going bravely into action, had shouted out things like 'Blacklegs' and, 'You're prolonging the War'—expressions that were to be heard again later. The officers in many places had lost their influence and allowed themselves to be swept along with the rest.

"Our war machine was no longer efficient. Our fighting power had suffered, even though the great majority of divisions still fought heroically.

"The 8th August put the decline of that fighting power beyond a doubt and in such a situation as regards reserves, I had no hope of finding a strategic expedient whereby to turn the situation to our advantage. On the contrary, I became convinced that we were now without that safe foundation for the plans of G.H.Q. on which I had hitherto been able to build, at least as far as this is possible in war. Leadership now assumed, as I then stated, the character of an irresponsible game of

chance, a thing I have always considered fatal. The fate of the German people was for me too high a stake. The war must be ended."

At the beginning of the German offensive there were only 300,000 Americans at the front. By July the figure had risen to 1,200,000. At about this time the British and French forces alone were already equal in numbers to the German Army in the West; the American forces gave the Allies a formidable superiority, while Germany's manpower reserves had been so exhausted during the course of the war that there could be no question of filling the gaps, much less of equalling the numerical strength of the Allies. Besides, the Allies possessed a large number of tanks, which German industry even in 1918 had failed to produce in any appreciable numbers.

On August 14, a Crown Council was held at Spa, William II, the Crown Prince, von Hindenburg, Ludendorff and Chancellor Hertling participating. "At the Conference in Spa," according to Ludendorff's evidence, "the supreme military leaders gave the political heads of the Empire to understand, without any possible doubt, that the war could no longer be won with arms, and that all that could be done was to keep the enemy in check by means of a strategic defensive."

The Crown Council decided to take the first favourable opportunity of approaching the Entente, through the intermediary of the King of Spain or the Queen of the Netherlands, concerning cessation of hostilities and peace. However, it proposed to wait for a lull in the Allied offensive, so that the *démarche* for an armistice should not be made under military pressure.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent events showed how

<sup>1</sup> On September 11, 1918, the Kaiser himself, in a speech addressed to the Krupp workers at Essen, considered it politic to make a public denial of Germany's war guilt, shifting the responsibility on the Allies:

"My dear friends of the Krupp Works: I have long been drawn to you during this war, but, as you know, I had to obey the call of many military and political duties. That was why I was again and again obliged to postpone my plan to come to you. I can well imagine that some of you during this long war have been repeatedly asking yourselves: How was this possible and why had this to happen to us, after forty years of peace? The German people was industrious, reserved, ambitious, and inventive in all spheres, it worked both intellectually and physically. But there were those who did not want to work, but wanted to rest on their laurels. They were our enemies. They became annoyed with us on account of our prosperous work and prosperous development: industry and science, art and popular education, social legislation and so forth, this advanced our people, causing jealousy. Jealousy induced our enemies to fight, and the war came upon us when we least expected it."

So, the war had taken Germany unawares!



ill-founded this optimism was, for the Allied offensive continued without interruption until November 11.

By September 13, 1918, the Germans had already been driven back to the Hindenburg Line. On that day the Emperor Charles made it known that Austria-Hungary had decided to ask for a separate peace, which meant virtual rupture of the alliance with Germany. Fortunately for Germany, the Allies on the following day refused the Austro-Hungarian request; but the German Government now knew that it could no longer rely on the loyalty of its partner.

By about the end of September, Allied numerical superiority was such that it left no doubt as to the outcome of the war. The German Army in the West numbered not more than 2,500,000 men, whereas the American forces alone already numbered half that figure. Besides, the Allies possessed a crushing superiority in tanks and other war material. The German troops, weakened as they were by uninterrupted fighting, had grasped the inevitability of defeat; this translated itself into a daily increasing number of desertions, the men leaving their units and tramping across the country.

On September 29, Bulgaria laid down her arms. Bulgaria's defection left no doubt as to the probability of an Allied occupation of Rumania. The German Armies were faced with the mortal danger of losing their petrol supply; petrol reserves for aviation and motorised transport were sufficient for only two months. The loyalty of the Hapsburgs could also not be relied upon, and an Austrian defection would have involved the danger of an Allied invasion of Germany from the South, through the Tyrol. The German Government in its consternation demanded that the Emperor should come to Berlin. William II left Spa for Berlin.

The German High Command had realized that a military *débâcle* was imminent, and from September 20 began to send the Government more and more alarming reports: "The troops are still holding, but there is no knowing what will happen to-morrow . . ." "The front might be pierced at any moment . . ." Ludendorff pressed the Government to secure an immediate armistice; at this period he also became in favour of a Government representing all the important Reichstag groups, with a view

to giving Germany a democratic aspect, thereby winning the sympathy of the Allies and wresting more favourable armistice terms from them.

From now on, Ludendorff concentrated all his energies on getting power placed into the hands of the Reichstag. Grasping the inexorable necessity of as early an armistice as possible, he set aside his personal sympathies and tried to save what could still be saved from disaster by fashioning a "democratic" face for Germany with his own hands. It was a spectacle unique in history: a military dictator, as his last political act, forcing power into the hands of the parliamentary majority. The latter viewed events passively and without thinking of any independent action. The political parties, being accustomed to obey and defer to the Supreme Command, followed its watchword.

On September 28, Ludendorff sent Chancellor Hertling a message revealing his idea and stating that "a modification or reconstruction of the Government on a broader basis has become necessary." The Chancellor was stupefied by this parliamentary *volte face* on the part of the Supreme Command, and preferred resignation to following the military dictator in his political evolution.

Since democracy and the introduction of a parliamentary régime seemed necessary to Ludendorff only for the purpose of wresting an armistice from the Allies, it is only natural that a Crown Council should have been held at Spa the following day to discuss the question of an armistice. The participants were again the Emperor, Hindenburg, Ludendorff and Hertling. The military leaders announced that the military situation demanded immediate negotiation for an armistice, in order to prevent the collapse of the armies at the front. The Council decided to address an appeal to President Wilson requesting an armistice and, at the same time, notify acceptance of the famous Fourteen Points by Germany. Under pressure from the military leaders, the Emperor also approved of the idea of introducing a parliamentary régime.<sup>1</sup> The following day

<sup>1</sup> The German Foreign Office supported the point of view of the Supreme Command in a memorandum dated September 28.

"The most important prerequisite of the attainment of peace is the formation, upon the free initiative of His Majesty the Emperor, of a new Government on a broad national basis. . . . The new Cabinet should unite all the forces of the people. . . . The new Government thus formed will approach President Wilson

Chancellor Hertling resigned, and that evening the General Staff sent Count Roedern, Financial State Secretary, to Berlin to hasten the formation of a parliamentary Government that would be in a position to implement the decisions of the Crown Council.

Ludendorff attached so much importance to the rapid formation of such a Government that he sent Major von dem Busche, of the General Staff, to accompany Count Roedern. Ludendorff himself was unable to go because the military situation demanded his presence at General Headquarters. But he charged Major von dem Busche with the mission of explaining to the political parties the critical situation of the Army, and of exerting the necessary pressure to speed up the creation of a new Government. He himself telephoned and telegraphed to Berlin to explain the need for haste in forming a parliamentary Government as an indispensable condition of an armistice.

*Formation of Prince Max von Baden's Parliamentary Government—Supreme Command Insists on Urgency of Immediate Armistice — Government Asks Allies for Armistice—Divergencies between Majority Socialists and Independent Socialists*

On October 1, Hindenburg himself, upon learning that Prince Max von Baden might undertake to form a parliamentary Government, sent a telegram to the Vice-Chancellor stating that the request for an armistice could be deferred for twenty-four hours if the Government was to be formed that evening; but if not, "if there should be any doubt as to the formation of the Cabinet, I am strongly of opinion that the declaration to the Foreign Powers should be issued to-night."

The same day, von Hertling, who was still functioning as Chancellor, and who had been alarmed by Hindenburg's telegram, requested Lersner, his representative with the Supreme Command, to see Ludendorff and report to him on the interview. Lersner sent the following report:

General Headquarters,  
October 1, 1918.

"General Ludendorff informed me that our offer must be sent on to Washington from Berne forthwith. The Army could not wait forty-

eight hours. He urgently requests Your Excellency to do all you can to get the offer through in the speediest way possible.

"I told him plainly that the enemy could hardly send a reply within a week, in spite of all the speeding up. The General stated that all depended on the offer being in the hands of the Entente at latest on Wednesday or Thursday morning, and begs Your Excellency to put everything in motion for that purpose. To speed up things, he believed the Note could be transmitted by wireless from Nauen to the address in the Swiss Code."  
(Signed) Lersner.<sup>1</sup>

On October 2, Major von dem Busche presented an official statement from the Supreme Command to the representatives of the parliamentary groups. The following were present at the meeting: Count Westarp (Conservative), Gamp (Empire Party), Stresemann (National Liberal), Groeber (Centre), Fischbeck (Progressive), Ebert (Majority Socialist), Haase (Independent Socialist) and Seyda (Polish). The spokesman of the Supreme Command gave them to understand that the war was lost, that continuation of military resistance might make the enemy's terms harsher, and that it was necessary to act quickly in order to secure an armistice. Major von dem Busche finished the statement with these despairing words: "The Supreme Command have seen fit to propose to His Majesty that an attempt be made to put an end to the struggle . . . every twenty-four hours can impair the situation and give the enemy a chance to discover our real weakness." The authorised representatives of the Reichstag were also confronted with the Supreme Command's appeal to form a parliamentary Government in order to save Germany from disaster.

The timorousness of the Reichstag may be gauged from its choice of the first Parliamentary Chancellor. By a reflex of long habit, the political parties selected as their head a representative of the German dynasties, Prince Max von Baden, by whom Ludendorff's order to form a parliamentary Government was carried out. The new parliamentary Government based itself on the support of the three parties constituting the Reichstag majority, that is to say, the Majority Socialists (Bauer and Scheidemann), the Centre (Trimborn, Groeber and Erzberger), and the Progressives (Vice-Chancellor von Payer and Haussmann).

<sup>1</sup> See Philipp Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, Vol. II., pp. 482-483.

The Ministry of War was entrusted to General von Scheuch, and that of Foreign Affairs to Solf, former Colonial State Secretary.

One of the members of the first parliamentary Government in Germany, Philipp Scheidemann, frankly confessed that the head of this Government had been appointed in agreement with the Supreme Command:

"As the error of ignoring the influence of the Supreme Command or belittling it in political matters has repeatedly been made in the past, it must be clearly borne in mind that Prince Max, according to his own account, inquired first of the Supreme Command whether they were agreed to his appointment as Chancellor. . . . Even in the present crisis, when Hindenburg and Ludendorff were at their wit's end and were asking the Chancellor to help them, they were first consulted as to whether the prospective Chancellor was acceptable. Hindenburg and Ludendorff approved of the appointment"<sup>1</sup>

The entry of the Majority Socialists into the Government of Prince Max von Baden was condemned by the Independent Socialists, as shown, for instance, by their Proclamation of October 5, 1918:

"To the Workers of Germany!

"The militarist system has received a blow from which it will never recover. . . . The policy of the Socialist Party, of the Scheidemanns and Eberts, the Davids and Lensches, has collapsed, just like that of the ruling classes. . . . At a time when bourgeois society is creaking in every joint, several Social Democrats, including Scheidemann and Bauer, have been appointed Ministers. The Social Democrats have thus been officially stamped as Government Socialists. The Socialist Party has been called into the Government after the collapse of imperialism to support bourgeois society. It has undertaken the task of organising 'national defence' and of protecting the bourgeois order. . . . The program advanced by the Socialist Party as a condition of its entry into the Government was so modest that even in the view of various bourgeois newspapers it did not go far enough."

It is interesting to note that despite the fact that the central power was taken over by a parliamentary Government, Germany continued to be controlled by the generals whose task was to supervise the civil administration. For instance, until November 9, General von Lissingen, the Military Governor of Berlin, went on exercising his discretionary powers to forbid the workers to hold political meetings, to arrest agitators and to censor the Press—

<sup>1</sup> Philipp Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, London, Vol. II., p. 483.

upon his orders, news of the events at Kiel was suppressed by the Berlin newspapers.

On October 9, a political crisis was nearly precipitated over a letter written by Prince Max von Baden on January 12, 1918, from Karlsruhe to his cousin, Prince Alexander von Hohenlohe, who was then in Switzerland. In that letter the future head of the first parliamentary Government had expressed firm opposition to the introduction of a parliamentary régime in Germany and to the Peace Resolution of July 19, 1917. The letter contained the following passage :

" . . . Since I object to Western parliamentarianism for Germany and Baden, I had to tell the people of Baden and of Germany that while I understand its needs, I can see no help in institutions. And thus I acquire a platform on which I can keep in my own hands the methods I wish to apply, and the people of Baden follow gladly because they feel that their anxieties and their needs are understood. . . . I, too, naturally wish that our successes should be exploited as far as possible, and far from agreeing with the so-called Peace Resolution, which was the misbegotten child of fear and of the Berlin dog days, I want the greatest possible compensations in some form or other, so that we may not become too poor after the war. In this matter my view is not, of course, on all fours with yours. For I am not yet in favour of saying more on Belgium than has been said already. The enemy knows enough, and in dealing with so astute and worldly wise an adversary as England, Belgium is the only pawn for compensation that we possess."<sup>1</sup>

The letter was intercepted by an agent of the Entente and published on October 9, in a Swiss journal, the *Freie Zeitung* of Berne. Prince Max von Baden in this connection wrote in his Memoirs :

" . . . My embarrassment was now great, greater since I had been compelled on entering office to give up my own policy—I had to represent a Government which I had not formed and never would have formed, and to sign an offer which had been resolved upon without me and forced through in spite of me. The peace resolution which I there criticised was a challenge in comparison with our request for the armistice, and my Government had been formed according to an ultra-democratic scheme, unknown even in the parliamentarily governed countries of the West. Up to now I had no opportunity of confessing my own political creed which was thus brought to light by the Entente.<sup>2</sup> . . . The letter caused great offence and alarm among my parliamentary colleagues and in the parties that supported them. . . . All through the 12th and 13th October the Inter-party Committee was in permanent session and in a state of

<sup>1</sup> *The Memoirs of Prince Max von Baden*, translated by W. M. Calder and C. H. Sutton, Constable & Co., Ltd., London, 1928, Vol. I., pp. 198-200.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., pp. 76-83.

aggrievedness, complaining, kidding and hearing expert opinions. The meeting was at first confined to the chosen few, then it was extended to the full assembly, beginning in the Reichstag and continuing at Payer's, where they came to receive my explanations, then later on to hear Solf and Count Rantzau, who had arrived in the meantime, upon the effect of the letter abroad and upon my political character.

"The dominant factor was the conscientious scruples of the Social Democrats as to remaining members of a Government headed by such a prince.

"Scheidemann had already formulated a letter of resignation which he brought with him and read aloud in the Committee. He added. 'All our party organs are unanimous that it is impossible for us to remain in the Cabinet. Wilson cannot be expected to treat any longer with such a Chancellor. I cannot deny that I have grown really fond of Prince Max in the last few days. But it is unthinkable that the Prince should be allowed to remain.' Ebert seconded him, the Chancellor's policy had appeared to him to be consistent—the consistency had now been destroyed for ever.

"Erzberger and Stresemann reminded them how inopportune a change of Chancellor would be, there were certain reforms which could only be secured by the Prince. Stresemann warned the Social Democrats against attempts at revolution.

"Payer and Haussmann did their best to reassure Ebert and Scheidemann. The way they treated the affair would be a test of their ability to distinguish the essential from the trivial . . ." <sup>1</sup>

On October 12, the Chancellor made a statement to the leaders of the parliamentary majority to the effect that his political opinions had been misinterpreted because he had used a careless style in a private letter. But he nevertheless hastened to add: "Even to-day I am against an uncritical adoption of Western institutions. I believe that evolution in Germany must proceed in accordance with its own inner laws." This equivocal explanation was judged to be adequate by all the parties, including the Socialists.

"On October 13 Ebert informed the assembled Inter-Party Committee that the reading of the Chancellor's declaration had made a great impression on the Party Executive, but that before the final decision the party as a whole must be heard. Erzberger thereupon as spokesman of the High Command, declared that they must refuse all responsibility for the military consequences of a change of Chancellor, and to my idea, this ought to have finished it. But the questions and discussions dragged on in the party rooms for days till at last the Social Democratic ministers received permission to remain in the Cabinet" <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit*, Vol. II., pp 76-83.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*

Thus Prince Max von Baden went on to carry out the functions of the first head of German democracy.

However, the new Chancellor had some doubts as to the absolute need to accept President Wilson's Fourteen Points and urgently request an armistice. He communicated his doubts to the Supreme Command and asked for a written document calling upon him to approach the Allies.

On October 2, he took advantage of the arrival of Hindenburg himself in Berlin and communicated his doubts to him. The Marshal replied: "Within a week I am expecting a fresh attack, but I cannot give you any assurance of it not ending in disaster!" The Emperor also supported the view of the Supreme Command, cutting short the arguments of Prince Max of Baden with the words: "You do not come here to make things harder for the Supreme Command!" But the Chancellor did not yield without first requesting Marshal Hindenburg to confirm to him in writing the Supreme Command's request concerning an immediate armistice.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, on October 3, Hindenburg, with the consent of Ludendorff, sent the following letter to the Chancellor:

"The Supreme Command continues to hold to its demand expressed on September 29 of this year that a request for an armistice should be sent to our enemies immediately. As a result of the collapse on the Macedonian front, the consequent weakening of the reserves on our Western front, and the impossibility of making good the very severe losses which we have suffered in the last few days, there is, as far as it is humanly possible to judge, no further chance of forcing peace on the enemy. Our adversaries are continually bringing up fresh reserves. The German army still stands firm and is successfully resisting all attacks. Nevertheless, the situation becomes daily more critical; and the Supreme Command may be forced to take very grave decisions. The circumstances call for a cessation of hostilities in order to spare the German nation and its allies needless sacrifices. Each day that is lost costs the lives of thousands of brave soldiers."

This letter of Marshal von Hindenburg's gives the lie direct to the stab-in-the-back legend concocted some months later, that is, the legend that the German Army was not beaten in the field, but was forced to capitulate by an internal revolution. The leaders of that Army had

<sup>1</sup> Philip Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, London, Vol. II., pp. 493-494.



admitted in a written document more than a month before the commencement of the revolutionary troubles that Germany had been conquered by the Allies and that an armistice was inevitable.

Prince Max von Baden, in an article published in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on November 16, 1918, gave the following account of events :

"I feel that it is incumbent upon me to give an account of the fateful weeks that lie behind me, during which I was responsible for the management of Reich affairs. . . . When I was called to Berlin I was aware of the seriousness of the situation . . . The war was lost. All that could be done was to avert the intolerable from the German people. . . . I was unable to achieve my aims in home and foreign policy . . . My peace policy was decisively hampered by the request for an armistice, which was placed before me all ready when I arrived in Berlin. I opposed it for reasons of practical policy. It seemed to me a grave error to accompany the first peace move of the new Government with such a surprising admission of German weakness. Neither our own people, nor our foreign enemies viewed our military situation in such a manner that a desperate step of this kind was necessary. I made the counter-proposal . . . The military authorities only replied . . . that the situation at the front demanded an armistice proposal within twenty-four hours. If I failed to make it, then it would have to be made by the old Government. I thereupon decided to form the new Government and to back the armistice proposal that had now become unavoidable with the name of the new, uncompromised Government. The effect of the armistice proposal justified my worst fears. A wave of high spirits swept through France and Britain . . ."

Obedying the injunctions of the Supreme Command, the Government on the night of October 3-4, sent a Note to President Wilson asking for an armistice and peace. This Note, which had the full approval of the Supreme Command, was as follows :

"The German Government requests the President of the United States of America to take steps for the restoration of peace, to notify all belligerents of this request, and to invite them to delegate plenipotentiaries for the purpose of taking up negotiations. The German Government accepts, as a basis of the peace negotiations, the program laid down by the President of the United States in his message to Congress of January 8, 1918, and in his subsequent pronouncements, particularly in his address of September 27, 1918. In order to avoid further bloodshed the German Government desire to bring about the immediate conclusion of a general armistice on land, on water, and in the air.—Max, Prince von Baden."

Owing to a protracted correspondence between the

Allies and Germany following this first German Note, the armistice was not concluded until a month later.

It should be noted that the successive communications sent by the Reich Government were nearly all approved by the Supreme Command, to which they were submitted by the Chancellor, who wanted to share the responsibility with the military leaders.<sup>1</sup> The Supreme Command's sole preoccupation was the fear that the German Army might disintegrate under the formidable pressure of the Allied offensive. When, on October 9, W. Rathenau suggested to the Supreme Command resistance at all costs, even by the desperate means of a *levée en masse*, this idea was rejected as impracticable.

During October, while the Notes and replies succeeded each other, Germany's defeat in the field became more and more evident. On October 15, 1918, the Allied Armies broke through the Hindenburg Line, and German resistance was weakening.

However, as late as October 17, 1918, the Executive of the Majority Socialist Party issued a Proclamation animated by a spirit of resistance; here are the most interesting passages :

"The situation of our country is very grave. The South-Eastern front has collapsed and on the Western Front the vast armies of the Entente, which has the manpower and economic resources of three Continents at its disposal, are flinging themselves against our troops with a terrific preponderance in men and material.

"Germany and the German people are in danger of becoming the victims of the lust of conquest of Anglo-French chauvinists and politicians of conquest

<sup>1</sup> Among several successive notes dispatched by Germany to President Wilson there was one (October 27, 1918) of such significance that it deserves to be quoted :

"The German Government takes cognisance of the reply of the President of the United States.

"The President knows of the deep-rooted changes which have taken place and are still taking place in German constitutional life. The peace negotiations will be conducted by a People's Government, in whose hands the decisive power rests in accordance with the Constitution, and to which the Military Power will also be subject.

"The German Government now awaits the proposals for an armistice which will introduce a peace of justice such as the President in his pronouncements has described."

The main idea of the note was very simple :—Germany had become a democracy (this was still before the abdication of the Kaiser<sup>1</sup>) and her military authorities were under the control of the democratic civil Government. Therefore she had the moral right to claim a just peace, that is to say, a peace which would let her get away without any punishment for the war. It was a brilliant idea, but it was based on a flagrant lie, because General Headquarters continued to rule Germany and even the text of the Note was drafted with their approval.

"On August 4, 1914, we declared 'We will not leave the Fatherland in the lurch in the hour of peril.' That applies to-day with increased force. The German people will never resign itself to a peace of violation, humiliation, and injury to its vital interests."

On the other hand, the Independent Socialists took a very different attitude. On October 23, 1918, Haase, in the Reichstag, fixed German responsibility in the following terms :

"... Great old Empires have crashed ; militarism with its whole program has miserably collapsed . . . The German people feel they have been misled and defrauded, for during the last few years it has daily been treated to untruths by the Press, including that of the Government Socialists . . . There was a storm of indignation against us in the Reichstag when we said that in this world war there would be neither victors nor vanquished. I was even told by Dr David (leader of the Government Socialists) that I was representing foreign interests. We predicted that unrestricted U-boat warfare would lead the German people to the brink of an abyss, but again without getting a hearing, until it was too late . . . All parties, except my own, share the guilt for the misfortune that unrestricted U-boat warfare has brought on Germany, because they all, from Count Westarp to Scheidemann, voted for the relevant Resolution of the House ; after all, the Government Socialists granted the now collapsed system the means to continue this struggle. The Peace Resolution of 1917 ought at least to be buried ; how it can be brought into harmony with the Wilsonian principles (turning towards the majority), that is your secret. How that Resolution is to be interpreted may be gathered from the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest ; both are treaties of violence, not just treaties. Germany must become a Republic . . . Not talk, but the will of the people must decide."

*Volte-Face of Supreme Command—Ludendorff Resigns and is Succeeded by Groener—Problem of Kaiser's Abdication—Sailors, Soldiers and Workers Revolt—Republic in Bavaria*

During the second half of October, the General Staff seemed to have changed its mind, pronouncing itself for the rejection of the Allied terms and for a prolongation of hostilities. However, the situation had become worse, and in reality Germany could but choose between an armistice and a complete military *débâcle*. Why, then, had the military leaders changed their minds, considering that the procedure to secure an armistice had been set in motion at their express demand ? It appears that there is only one possible answer : that at the last moment they wanted

to shift the responsibility on the shoulders of the civil Government, though they well knew that their *volte-face* could no longer stop the negotiations in progress and thereby injure Germany's interests.

On October 25, Hindenburg and Ludendorff presented to the Emperor their new point of view, diametrically opposed as it was to that of four weeks earlier. The Emperor referred the matter to Vice-Chancellor von Payer, the Chancellor being ill at this time. Subsequently, the Vice-Chancellor had an interview with Ludendorff, but each adhered to his own attitude, and the Government decided to keep to the original view of the Supreme Command, as expressed by Marshal von Hindenburg on October 3.

On October 26, Ludendorff tendered his resignation, which was accepted by the Emperor the following day. The man who had for three years exercised a camouflaged dictatorship in Germany, the man who at the moment of defeat had considered it to be in the interests of his country to introduce a parliamentary democracy, and who had forced the Government to ask for an armistice, was leaving his post in order to save his own prestige and not share the responsibility of power when the armistice was signed. In November 1918, scared of the revolutionary movements, he fled to Sweden. In 1919, reassured by the turn of events, he returned to Germany and later felt so safe that he participated in the Kapp putsch in 1920, and in the Hitler putsch in 1923, in both cases with impunity.

The acceptance of Ludendorff's resignation was received by the Supreme Command with impotent rage. The Chancellor's representative with the Supreme Command, von Lamsdorf, made the following statement over the telephone, the same day, to Prince Max von Baden :

"The High Command is furious, but in view of my long experience with it, I must, with the utmost emphasis, put you on your guard against placing any trust in its promises and must recommend you not to allow yourself to be turned aside from the peace proposals which are in view. The military situation is as bad as it was three weeks ago. An improvement is not to be expected and the invasion of our territory is only a question of weeks or at most of a few months."

This objective evidence proves that the change in the Supreme Command's attitude was due to political motives,

and was by no means justified by the evolution of military events.

However, Hindenburg stayed on, to watch from his post over the destinies of defeated Germany. Ludendorff's place was taken by General Groener, Chief of Staff of the South Eastern Armies, who knew how to manœuvre in the midst of German democracy and how to adapt it to the interests of the "Vaterland."

On October 27, the Emperor William II received from the Emperor Charles of Austria a letter stating :

"Therefore I write to inform you that I have irrevocably decided to request within twenty-four hours a separate peace and an immediate cessation of hostilities"

Austria's defection definitely decided the Government to accept the Allied terms and to send a Note to that effect the same day.

A few days earlier, on October 23, President Wilson had sent a Note containing some phrases that seemed to be directly aimed at the monarchist system of Germany, or at any rate at the person of William II :

"... the nations of the world do not and cannot trust the word of those who have hitherto been the masters of German policy . . . If it (the American Government) must deal with the military masters or the monarchical autocrats of Germany now, or if it is likely to have to deal with them later in regard to the international obligations of the German Empire, it must demand, not peace negotiations, but surrender."

This Note of October 23 caused confusion in Germany. Until that day everyone was convinced that the creation of a parliamentary Government like that of Prince Max von Baden was calculated to appease the Allies, and that the monarchy could be saved by this expedient. No one thought of the abdication of the Kaiser, to whom all the political parties, including the Majority Socialists, remained loyal. At the last sitting of the Imperial Reichstag, on October 23, the parliamentary majority manifested only a single wish : preservation of a constitutional monarchy. Wilson's Note of October 23 suddenly placed Prince Max von Baden's Government before the dilemma : abdication of the Emperor or capitulation of Germany. The defection of Austria-Hungary tipped the scales against the Kaiser. The Government came to the conclusion that the abdication of William II alone could save Germany from the danger

of the Allies imposing complete capitulation on her. Germany was thus confronted with the necessity of ridding herself of her War Lord under Allied military pressure. He had to be sacrificed in order to save Germany. "A scapegoat had to be found, and there was the Emperor," Scheidemann observed. When William II became aware of the Government's new attitude, he replied to its insinuations by leaving for Spa, where he found himself among his faithful generals again on October 30. William II said to Admiral Hintze quite plainly: "Prince Max's Government is trying to throw me out. At Berlin I should be less able to oppose them than in the midst of my troops." For the moment he was not mistaken: the Supreme Command was supporting him in his resistance.

However, public opinion in Germany was beginning to grasp the extent of the military defeat. A month later than the Supreme Command, the Germans realized that the war was irretrievably lost, and resistance need not be thought of, since it would in any case be useless. The enthusiasm and discipline of four years of war was followed by weariness and pronounced slackness.

Events were brought to a head by the sudden change in the attitude of the Supreme Command. The masses, having learned from the Supreme Command that the war was irretrievably lost, did not understand the unexpected opposition of the military leaders to acceptance of the Allied terms, the more so because, of Germany's three allies, Bulgaria had laid down her arms on September 29, Turkey on October 31, and Austria-Hungary on November 3. Southern Germany was now exposed to an Allied attack.

The masses began to suspect that the Supreme Command was thinking of resistance not from any rational motive, but solely in order to save "national honour." And the average German had definitely had enough of this happy, joyous war that could no longer produce anything but defeats. When, at about the end of October, the German Admiralty decided to make a raid in the Channel with a view to cutting communications between Britain and the Continent, the sailors regarded this as an expression of the Supreme Command's new attitude and refused to lend

themselves to this crazy adventure. On October 28, 29 and 30, 1918, the crews of the "Markgraf," "Thuringen" and "Helgoland," at Kiel, refused to obey the orders of their superiors. In the circumstances the idea of the raid was abandoned, but 600 sailors were court-martialed between November 1 and 3. The comrades of the accused, fearing that the sentences would be carried out, and no longer having any faith in the Government, which allowed the military courts to do as they liked, decided to take the matter into their own hands. On November 3, mutiny broke out on board all the ships anchored at Kiel. The sailors elected their own councils, and the shipyard workers followed suit.

The events that ensued are related by Prince Max von Baden as follows :

"November 4, 1918. The Third Squadron had arrived in Kiel, had behaved in a very rebellious manner, and had threatened to kill some officers. There had been a bloody clash between crews of the Third Squadron and a marching detachment. There had been dead and wounded. The Navy was obviously no longer master of the situation. The State Secretary of the Reich Navy Office (Reichsmarineamt) asked, on behalf of the local authorities as well as on his own behalf, for the aid of the Social Democratic Party, i.e. that they should send Deputies to pacify the rebels.

"He stated that an explanatory leaflet was just being prepared at the offices of the *Vorwaerts*. . . . The local Command desired its immediate dissemination. The leaflet was signed by myself, State Secretary Haussmann and State Secretary Scheidemann"<sup>1</sup> The text of the leaflet was as follows :

"Leaflet issued by the Government and the Supreme Naval Command, November 4, 1918

"Sailors, Workers,

"Deplorable events have taken place during the past few days. There have been clashes between crews who tried to disturb order by force and others, who were instructed to maintain it, and there have been dead and wounded. An inquiry into the incident has begun, and all the circumstances that led to these deplorable events are to be carefully examined.

"According to the reports received by us so far, the prevailing agitation has been provoked by nonsensical rumours. It has been asserted that the officers of the Navy are not in agreement with the Government's peace policy and they were planning a coup de main

<sup>1</sup> Prinz Max von Baden, *Erinnerungen und Dokumente*, Berlin, 1927, p. 572 et seq.

which would uselessly expose the crews to death. The officers of the Navy are obeying the Government and the reproach levelled at them to the effect that they had infringed such obedience or intended to do so, is unjustified. No one is thinking of uselessly risking the lives of fellow-countrymen and fathers of families. Already, on October 5, the Government proposed to our enemies the conclusion of an armistice in order to avoid useless bloodshed. If the armistice has not yet been concluded, that is due to the fact that our enemies have not stated their terms. So long as hostilities continue by the will of the other side, the German Command both on land and at sea is endeavouring to economise with human life, as is consistent with the purpose of necessary defence. However, the task of avoiding useless bloodshed is incumbent not only on the Government, but also on the entire people. We do not want to end the international war in order to get civil war instead. Anyone spreading fantastic rumours and thereby causing disquiet and fanning the flame of civil war, is acting in an unscrupulous manner. Complaints will be investigated, just demands will be granted.

"However, the Government is also in duty bound to protect the people with all the means available to it against the misery that would arise from the destruction of order, in duty bound to proceed in accordance with right and justice—it bears full responsibility for this before the entire people and its elected representation, the Reichstag.

"Sailors, Workers,

"Are you aware of the responsibility you bear to your fellow countrymen? See to it that the grievous events of the last few days should remain isolated and that we should be able to settle our internal affairs in legitimate freedom, for the benefit of the German people and your own selves.

"Max, Prinz von Baden, Reich Chancellor.

Scheidemann, Secretary of State.

Ritter von Mann, State Secretary of the Reich Navy Office."

Thus the Government denied the true fact that the officers of the Navy had planned a big offensive action against the Allies, despite the armistice negotiations. Prince Max von Baden continues as follows:

"The same day we sent Deputy Noske, who, as the Naval Rapporteur of the S.D.P., was highly esteemed by the sailors. State Secretary Haussmann accompanied him as representative of the Government. At this moment the gentlemen of the Navy could also not see clearly, but they had one piece of definite information that was of decisive significance. On October 29 the Fleet was actually to have sailed for the decisive battle. On October 31 the order had been withdrawn under the impression of mutiny.

"During the night of November 4-5 fresh reports arrived from Kiel. On one point they were clear enough: Kiel was in the hands of the mutineers. On the morning of the 4th, the revolt had spread from barracks to barracks and the workers had made common cause with the sailors. At first it seemed that counter-action taken by the Governor



of Kiel, Admiral Souchon, was succeeding, part of a detachment of mutineers on the march—he reported—had been disarmed, while the rest had thrown away their weapons. But a few hours later revolt broke out in all the barracks, creating the impression of long, systematic preparation.

"Convinced that he could no longer hope to suppress the movement with the aid of the rest of the troops, the Governor on the afternoon of November 4, at 3 p.m., received delegations from the mutinous sailors, including those of the Third Squadron, and asked them for their motives. Members of both Social Democratic Parties were present. The following document was drawn up concerning this discussion.

"The Governor of Kiel listened to the wishes of the deputation of the Third Squadron and the detachment of marines. This evening, State Secretary Haussmann and Deputy Noske will arrive to hear the wishes of the Third Squadron and the detachments of troops. The wishes of the deputation are, in particular, as follows.

"1. Release of members of the Third Squadron subjected to disciplinary action.

"2. Clarification of the question of guilt. Who fired first in yesterday's bloody clash?

"3. Cancellation of the attack allegedly planned by the Fleet.'

"The situation as to relative power in Kiel was revealed in an alarming light by Souchon's words in reply to this: 'The first demand—release of those subjected to disciplinary action—has to be granted immediately. . . .'

"At 9 o'clock on the evening of November 4, a second meeting took place in the Governor's office, with the participation of our emissaries, Haussmann and Noske, who had arrived in the meanwhile.

"One thing is clear. Noske arrived in Kiel at the last moment to prevent Bolshevik chaos. The power had slipped from the hands of the naval authorities.

"Our two emissaries agreed that we had only one hope: voluntary reversion to order under Social Democratic leadership. Although the Independents were at work with a view to keeping the movement of revolt going, the trade unions were resisting them and supporting Noske. Everywhere among the workers and sailors—he reported—he sensed the re-awakening of the German's innate need for order.

"Noske left no doubt as to the following: his leadership was based on the faith of the sailors; he would protect them and be their spokesman as regards their essential demands: abdication of the Kaiser and amnesty for the present mutineers and those of 1917.

"Mann<sup>1</sup> and Erzberger raised grave objections in the Cabinet against the granting of an amnesty, Scheuch<sup>2</sup> also vigorously opposed this. . . . Haussmann assured us that the path taken by Noske would lead to success the most rapidly. He must not be stabbed in the back. To-day, he said, Noske believed that he could bring the men back to obedience

<sup>1</sup> Ritter von Mann, State Secretary of Reich Navy Ministry.

<sup>2</sup> Prussian War Minister.

through an amnesty. Noske had warned against any attempt to attack the city with troops. 'There would be a useless blood-bath; the 40,000 men involved could not be overcome and the attempt would render an understanding impossible.'

"For the moment we had no choice but to meet the Kiel situation in the following manner: 1. Isolation of the infected territory. 2. A free hand for Noske as regards the attempt to throttle the local revolt.

"The following morning Noske received the authority he had asked for.

"On the afternoon of November 6, the Cabinet met to consider the revolutionary disorders, Kiel itself had gradually quietened down. Noske was at the end of his tether, but he held out, and both the town and the garrison submitted to his authority."

Thus Noske mastered the sailors' revolutionary movement, this being facilitated by their moderate attitude. They demanded the liberation of their arrested comrades. Their other demands, partly of a political character, were far from revolutionary, as Prince Max von Baden himself found:

"They demanded the right of assembly, freedom to read all the newspapers, the right not to salute off duty, equal board, and revision of the penal regulations. . . ."

For the rest, Noske and the Government had done everything possible to isolate the sailors from the influence of the Independent Socialists, with a view to mastering the revolt all the better:

"On November 4 the sailors had despatched a telegram to Berlin requesting that Haase, Ledebour and Oscar Cohn might come immediately, but the telegram was held up on the way. It was of historic significance that the fallen Government allowed all Deputies of all other Parties freedom of movement, but did everything they could to keep the representatives of the Independents away from the scene of action."<sup>1</sup>

So complete was Noske's political victory that on November 7 the sailors elected him Governor of Kiel in succession to Admiral Souchon. The Government, of course, hastened to ratify his election.

Noske did not conceal his anti-revolutionary sentiments, for he himself recorded having, on November 6, made this clear to the sailors:

"I described to the men the situation as I saw it and discussed the situation in the Reich as a whole, together with the abominable condition in which our people found itself in consequence of the defeat, then

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Stroebel, *The German Revolution and After*, Garrolds Publishers, Ltd., London, 1923.

veered the train of thought to the question of the conditions on which the Kiel mutiny, which I personally severely condemned, could be ended"<sup>1</sup>

On November 9, Scheidemann sent the following telegram of congratulation to Noske:

"Dear Noske, Hold out like a brave man. Here things have gone tolerably so far. Unfortunately, now undermining work by Independents. But we are hoping to be able to give everything a favourable turn. Soldiers have come over to us without exception. Cordially, Philipp Scheidemann"<sup>2</sup>

Complying with Scheidemann's injunction, Noske stayed on at Kiel after the proclamation of the Republic. He did not leave his post as Governor until he became Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces that were to crush the revolutionary movement in Berlin.

Ex-Chancellor Prince Max von Baden expressed his appreciation of the services Noske had rendered to the cause of order at Kiel in the following words:

"Germany's destiny depended on the repetition by Ebert on a large scale of his party comrade's achievement, that is, the 'rolling up' of the movement in the whole country"<sup>3</sup>

Ebert and Noske entirely fulfilled the ex-Chancellor's hopes by becoming the pillars of the counter-revolution.

Despite Noske's success, the sailors' example had become contagious. This revolutionary movement soon spread to Luebeck, Altona, Bremen, Wilhelmshaven and Hamburg. On November 7, the revolt had already reached Munich, where the soldiers and workers upset the Government, proclaiming the Republic of Bavaria. The Independent Socialist Kurt Eisner had succeeded in Munich in bringing members of the moderate Left to his side, because his idea of overthrowing the Kaiser and other German princes seemed to the Bavarian soldiers, workers and peasants to be the only means of ensuring the cessation of hostilities. On November 8, Kurt Eisner found himself at the head of the first Republican Government in Bavaria and in Germany.

However, the Majority Socialists did their best to stop

<sup>1</sup> Noske, *Von Kiel bis Kapp*, Berlin, 1920, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Prince Max von Baden, *Erinnerungen und Dokumente*, p. 584.

the revolutionary movement, as witness the following appeal issued by the Party on November 4, 1918 :

"Workers ! Party Comrades ! By means of unsigned leaflets and verbal agitation you have been called upon to leave the factories and go out into the streets in a few days' time We urgently advise you not to comply. . . ."

But the efforts of the Majority Socialists were in vain. Germany had had enough of her lost war and manifested her discontent in a violent manner.

*Spectre of Military D  b  cle—German Delegation Crosses Enemy Lines to Receive Armistice Terms—The Kaiser, Deserted by his Subjects, Abdicates and Flees to Holland—Revolution as Consequence of Military Defeat—H. Bruening, Officer of Supreme Command's Elite Troops*

On November 5, Prince Max von Baden received a final Note from President Wilson inviting him to send accredited representatives of the German Government to Marshal Foch to receive the armistice terms.

Meanwhile, on November 4, the British broke through the German defensive line east of Valenciennes, between the Scheldt and the Sambre. Germany's enemies came to the conclusion that the German Army was no longer capable of effective resistance. General Groener, on his part, realized that the situation was hopeless. The day President Wilson's Note was received, he hastened to Berlin and said to the Chancellor : "We shall have to cross the lines with a white flag. Even a week is too long to wait. It must be Saturday (November 9) at the latest." The same advice had been given to the Chancellor the previous evening by the Kaiser, who asked that an armistice delegation with a white flag should be sent to Marshal Foch.

On November 6, 1918, Deputy M. Erzberger, leader of the Centre, was appointed by the Government to go and receive the Allied terms.

The same day General Groener returned to Spa. During his brief stay in Berlin he had learned that the Emperor's abdication was indispensable not only in order to put an end to hostilities and secure an armistice, but also for the maintenance of internal order.

The Chancellor had explained to him that the Emperor must abdicate in order to render an armistice possible. Ebert, Scheidemann and other leaders of the Socialist Party and the trade unions adjured Groener to exert pressure on the Emperor and the Crown Prince to renounce the throne ; they were of the opinion that this was the only way to save the monarchy.<sup>1 2</sup>

On his return to Spa, Groener explained the situation to Hindenburg, stressing the absolute necessity both of an immediate armistice and the abdication of the Kaiser.

On November 7, Erzberger and the other members of the Armistice Delegation arrived at Spa, where they were received by Hindenburg. The latter exhorted Erzberger to sacrifice himself for the good of the Fatherland and carry out his mission. Erzberger's last scruples were thereby dissipated, and he left Spa at about noon to cross the enemy lines.

On the afternoon of the same day Prince Max von Baden telephoned the Supreme Command in Spa to inform them of a Socialist ultimatum. The Socialists, obliged by the vast popular movement in favour of immediate peace and against the dynasties to change their attitude, which until the end of October was characterized by loyalty to

<sup>1</sup> Ebert agreed to the idea of the Kaiser's abdication with the greatest repugnance. When the other leaders of the Majority Socialist Party were already convinced of the inevitability of the abdication, Ebert was still trying to put a brake on them. In this connection Scheidemann in his *Memoirs* wrote : "The general view seems to be that the Kaiser cannot hold on. Ebert was doing all he could to restrain his Party and was trying to put the brake on by arguing that it would be a greater obstacle to peace if the Party, owing to the Kaiser's crisis, left the Government than if the Kaiser did not go. He hoped to restrain the Party Press for a few days longer." But when the revolutionary troubles began to appear on the horizon to some extent throughout the whole of Germany, and when a separatist tendency made itself felt in Bavaria, where a separate peace was being talked of, Ebert yielded to necessity and in a conversation with Chancellor Prince Max of Baden pronounced these memorable words : "If the Kaiser does not abdicate, Social Revolution must come. But I don't want it ; I hate it like sin." As to Scheidemann, his principal preoccupation is summed up in the following words, spoken in an interview with the Chancellor : "My party will take care that Germany is insured against Bolshevism." (Ph. Scheidemann, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., pp. 540, 545, 563.)

<sup>2</sup> The importance of the part played by the German Army in the political life of the Reich may be measured by the declaration made on October 26, 1918, by G. Stresemann, although he was a confirmed monarchist :

"I hope that you will be in agreement with me when I beg you to do everything possible to prevent Hindenburg's retirement. We must under no circumstances bear the responsibility before the bar of history for having overthrown Hindenburg. I feel that even the abdication of the Kaiser would be easier to bear than the retirement of Hindenburg."

(Letter addressed to the Chief of the National Liberal Party in Prussia.)

the Kaiser, had confronted the Chancellor with the choice between immediate abdication by the Kaiser and renunciation of the throne by the Crown Prince, and collective resignation of the Socialist Ministers. The object of this ultimatum was to satisfy the popular masses, while at the same time saving the monarchy, with another member of the Hohenzollern family as Emperor. The Socialists feared that unless the two least popular members of the Imperial House were sacrificed to the demand of the Allies and the weariness of the German masses, the overthrow of the régime would become inevitable. "A revolutionary gesture is necessary to forestall revolution," said Ebert, thus summing up the apprehensions of his Party.<sup>1</sup> The Chancellor was convinced and requested the Supreme Command to exert pressure on William II to abdicate.

When informed of the Chancellor's telephone message, William II indignantly refused. But on November 8, Groener succeeded in perturbing Hindenburg by explaining to him that the troops within the country were already contaminated by the revolutionary spirit, while the armies at the front were also shedding their sentiments of loyalty to the Emperor. William II, on receipt of the Chancellor's message, conceived the crazy idea of marching with the armies at the front on Germany with a view to crushing the revolution. Groener, however, knowing the state of mind of the soldiers, resolutely opposed this. Hindenburg yielded to his line of argument, and both of them were now in favour of Ebert's idea that the Imperial Crown must pass to one of the Crown Prince's sons.

As, however, the Emperor's headstrong opposition could not be surmounted, Hindenburg and Groener called a conference of general officers commanding the troops at the front for November 9. The meeting opened at 9 a.m. with a statement by the Marshal presenting the military and internal situations with the most complete frankness. So impressed were the generals by Hindenburg's statement that it was followed by "a silence of the tomb; not a word, not a whisper!" Subsequently, Hindenburg and

<sup>1</sup> According to Scheidemann's evidence, certain Socialists even on November 7 regretted that their Party had presented to the Chancellor the ultimatum concerning the abdication. When someone made a remark on this subject to David, the latter replied: "Don't talk about it. I too regret the step. It passes my understanding." (Ph. Scheidemann, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 556.)

Groener called on the Emperor, leaving the generals to deliberate on the situation. They had to answer two questions. The first was: "Would it be possible for the Emperor to regain control of Germany by force of arms if he placed himself at the head of the army?" Of the thirty-nine generals present, only one replied Yes, twenty-three No, and fifteen gave evasive replies. The second question was: "Would the troops march against the Bolsheviks in Germany?" Here eight replied Yes, nineteen No, and twelve uncertainly.

The Emperor received Hindenburg and Groener in the presence of the Crown Prince who had just arrived at Spa. Groener again presented the situation to William II, describing it as desperate: "The Army was no longer capable of fighting; there were no more reserves . . . the troops would not follow the Emperor in an attempt to suppress the internal revolution by force." Hindenburg supported Groener, but the Emperor would not be convinced. Two Prussian Generals, von Plessen and von Schulenburg, who were particularly attached to the person of William II, and who were present at the interview, contested the opinion of Hindenburg and Groener, advising armed action against the country. Both Hindenburg and Groener were opposed to this idea, which was equivalent to a declaration of civil war. Groener went so far as to declare that: "The Army will return home in peace and order under its leaders and commanding generals, but not under your Majesty's command, because it is no longer behind your Majesty." During these sometimes stormy discussions, Colonel Heye brought along the result of the conference of generals. Worse and worse news was also coming in from Berlin, where the monarchy itself seemed to be threatened.

In the afternoon, before William II was able to make up his mind, a message came from Berlin to the effect that the Chancellor had of his own accord announced the abdication of the Kaiser and renunciation of the throne by the Crown Prince, and had handed power to Ebert. The Kaiser thus found himself confronted with a *fait accompli*.

It was then that Hindenburg advised the Kaiser not only to abdicate, but also to flee to Holland. He was

supported by Admiral Scheer, who declared that he (Scheer) could no longer rely on the Navy, which had mutinied a few days earlier.

William II, abandoned by his generals, finally decided to abdicate as Emperor of Germany, but not as King of Prussia. At dawn the following day, that is, on November 10, he and the Crown Prince crossed the Dutch frontier.

William II left Germany after being completely defeated in the field. On the day he abdicated the German Army had only seventeen reserve divisions, of which only two were fresh, as against one hundred Allied reserve divisions, of which sixty were fresh. Some German divisions at the front had been reduced to four or five hundred men. Germany had been defeated before the first movements of revolt had stirred within the country. The revolution was only a consequence of the defeat and was a manifestation of the anger of the popular masses, who up to October 1918, had firmly believed in the victory of the Central Powers.

"The creation of a revolutionary situation in 1918—and this is the primary fact with which all the histories of the German Republic should begin—was due primarily and almost entirely to military defeat in the field."<sup>1</sup>

Shortly afterwards the Supreme War Lord recalled his august person to his beloved Germany in a rather singular fashion. On November 28, that is, barely eighteen days after his abdication, he sent the Government the following letter :

"I have signed my abdication from the Throne in the form prescribed by the Government. I confidently expect that the Government, in accordance with their previous statement, will give up my property and that of my family and guarantee without any limitations the lives, honour and possessions of all the Royal Family. Wilhelm II" <sup>2</sup>

It will perhaps be of interest to add to this the description of the Imperial larder which appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on November 20, 1918 :

"I was prepared to find a big store cupboard, but what I saw surpassed all my expectations. In big white, panelled rooms was everything—

<sup>1</sup> *The Fall of the German Republic*, R. T. Clark, p. 23. The same idea has been expressed by Scheidemann in the following terms: "The collapse was not the consequence of the Revolution, it was the other way about: without the collapse the Revolution that broke out six weeks later would probably not have occurred."  
(Philip Scheidemann, *Op cit*, Vol II, p. 506)

<sup>2</sup> Philip Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, London, 1929, Vol. II., p. 596.



yes, really everything—in the provision line that one could possibly conceive. It was amazing to find such colossal piles of food could, after four years of war, be stored up. We found meat and poultry on ice, soups and sauces in big bottles, pure white flour in sacks piled up to the ceiling. Thousands of eggs, huge tins of lard, coffee, chocolate, jellies and preserves of every kind were all neatly arranged on apparently unending shelves. Hundreds of sugar loaves, stone fruit, dried fruit, biscuits, etc. I was speechless. The value of the provisions amounted to several hundred thousand marks. We were told on good authority that these piles of stores were for the Kaiser's private household and not for the court."<sup>1</sup>

While his people, after four years of war and blockade, was at the end of its food supply, the Kaiser had taken good care of himself, as he was doing now, after his abdication. Yet the Germans resigned themselves to his abdication only under pressure from the Allies!

In connection with the events that took place at Spa, it is interesting to note that the Supreme Command had taken precautions against possible movements of revolt among the soldiers at the front. It had caused special units of proved loyalty to be formed. These were grouped under the Command of General Winterfeldt and were to meet any eventuality. One of the officers of this body was none other than the future Chancellor, H. Bruening, at that time a lieutenant. He distinguished himself by repressing, on November 8, 1918, at Herbesthal, a mutiny of some soldiers. Nevertheless, a few days later the soldiers of his regiment designated him as delegate to the Soldiers' Council.

*Urban Masses Overthrow the Monarchy—Workers' and Soldiers' Councils Designate First Republican Government—Attitude of Political Parties—Revolution Begets Moderate Government—Ebert's Alliance with Supreme Command*

On November 9, a general strike broke out in Berlin; the soldiers and workers were electing their Councils in an agitated atmosphere. Events were precipitated at a faster rate than the Government had anticipated. The Kaiser's abdication, announced by Prince Max von Baden, was not enough for the revolting masses, which by their attitude forced the Majority Socialists to leave the Government.

<sup>1</sup> Ph. Scheidemann, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 597

The Chancellor, seeing his Government disintegrate, resigned on November 9, in favour of the leader of the Majority Socialists, Herr Ebert. The latter was still hoping to be able to save the dynasty. On November 9, he had an interview with Prince Max von Baden, imploring him to accept the post of Reich Regent. The ex-Chancellor refused. Nevertheless, for two days, November 9 and 10, Ebert continued to use the title of Imperial Chancellor.

But in the end the monarchy succumbed to the pressure of the masses. On November 10, Scheidemann, yielding to the crowds demonstrating in the streets, proclaimed the Republic from the balcony of the Reichstag. The same day the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, meeting at the Busch Circus, designated a new Government, but, significantly enough, with Ebert at its head. Ebert changed his title, becoming, from Imperial Chancellor, head of the revolutionary Government of the German Republic. In reality, this did not make him any more radical than he had been before.

The events of the November days were the reflex of the weariness of the soldiers, sailors and workers who, after four years of unremitting effort, had ceased to believe in the possibility of preventing an Allied victory. The inhabitants of the great cities demonstrated their discontent by appointing Soldiers' and Workers' Councils. All the political parties, except the Independents and the Spartacists, were surprised by this revolt of the urban masses. The Opposition that had formed in the Reichstag in 1917, being composed by the Progressives (later Democrats), the Catholic Centre and the Majority Socialists, had not thought, even in their most daring dreams, of anything but a constitutional monarchy. Their aspirations were more than satisfied by the formation of Prince Max von Baden's parliamentary Government. A Republic with Soldiers' and Workers' Councils was a painful surprise to the three Opposition parties, indeed, almost a nightmare.

The parties of the Right, Conservatives, National Liberals and others, felt the responsibility for the imperial régime weighing heavily on them. They were terrified by the events of November, imagining that the German people might proceed to settle accounts with its governing class

after the manner of the Russian Revolution. But their fears soon proved to have been ill-founded.

Germany's revolutionary spirit, except in the big cities, was not very profound, as indicated by the following incident. On November 9, that is, on the day the Kaiser abdicated, there was a by-election at Neistettin. The Conservative Deputy, von Bonin, was re-elected by a majority of 3,835 votes against 1,227 for the Socialist candidate, Riedel.

As regards the big cities, the Majority Socialists undertook the task of pacifying the people and restoring the traditional respect for social order. For this reason they played a decisive role during the first year of the Republic. The leaders of the Party had supported the Imperial Government and the High Command during the first three years of the war. When, in 1917, the chance of a German victory had vanished, the Socialists joined with the Progressives and the Centre in supporting Erzberger's Resolution proclaiming the principle of peace without annexations; this program provided for a notable exception—the annexations in the East, where even the parties voting for Erzberger's Resolution were hoping to be able to save the conquests made at the expense of Russia. The moral disintegration of the German Army surprised the Socialists no less than the other parties, and the advent of the Republic took them completely unawares. The idea of a constitutional monarchy or of a Regency on behalf of the Hohenzollern family had to be abandoned. The pressure of the masses, stimulated by the Independent Socialists and the Spartacists, could not be dammed. When Scheidemann yielded to the crowds and proclaimed the Republic, he was acting under the impression of a rumour that Karl Liebknecht intended to proclaim a Soviet Republic, and he wanted to anticipate him. However, Ebert was nevertheless considerably upset when he learned that Scheidemann had thus crossed the Rubicon of the Republic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The conditions under which the German Republic was born are brought into clear relief by the American author, Frederick L. Schuman:

"The Republic itself, called into being not by ardent German republicans (they were too few), but 'made-to-order' by Woodrow Wilson, was conceived in defeat and born in national bitterness and humiliation. As the illegitimate child of allied victory and Social Democratic opportunism, it saw the light on a day of despair. It began life unwanted and unloved."

(*Germany since 1918*, Henry Noel Company, N Y., 1937, p. 15.)

[Note continued on page 215.]

The new Government was of a revolutionary origin, for it had been designated by a meeting of the delegates of the workers and soldiers of Berlin.<sup>1</sup> However, the military defeats and the prospect of a *débâcle* had caused such disillusionment among the German people, which had for four years lived in the certainty of victory and in hopes of conquest, that the example of the sailors of Kiel was followed without opposition by revolutionary movements throughout Germany. The abdication of the Emperor, the living symbol of a triumphant Germany, had precipitated events. When the workers and soldiers of Berlin had designated the new Government, no one in Germany thought it possible to oppose this.

The actual composition of the Government was far less revolutionary than its origin: It was for the most part composed of peaceable men, parliamentary leaders broken in to the political life of the Reichstag, men imbued with the spirit of order and of respect for tradition. At bottom, the Majority Socialist members of the Government had been no less frightened by the Revolution than the capitalist classes. The head of the Government—Ebert—even said: “I hate the Revolution like sin.”

The Government, based on a coalition of the Majority Socialists and the Independent Socialists, was composed of six members—three Majority Socialists: Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg, and three Independents: Haase, Dittmann and Barth. These six People’s Commissars suddenly became the dictators of defeated Germany. They

[*Note continued from page 214.*]

Scheidemann reports a violent scene with Ebert, thus: “He banged his fist on the table and yelled at me: ‘Is it true?’” On my replying that it was not only true, but a matter of course, he made a scene which passed my understanding. “You have no right to proclaim the Republic. What becomes of Germany—whether she becomes a Republic or something else—a Constituent Assembly must decide” How could so wise a man judge so grossly the signs of the times as to talk on November 9 of a Regency, a substitute, an administrator for the Empire, and such old monarchist rubbish that had been totally scrapped!” And Scheidemann adds this mysterious remark: “Ebert to a certain extent was not a free agent.”

(Philipp Scheidemann, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 583.)

Was Ebert already under certain obligations to the Supreme Command? Scheidemann does not explain his remark.

<sup>1</sup> In reality, the Soldiers’ and Workers’ Councils only confirmed the composition of the Government, which had been previously settled by negotiations between the Majority Socialists and the Independent Socialists.

had to choose between two different paths: either to reform Germany radically, giving her an entirely different face from that of imperial and militarist Germany; or to save the old order, adapting it to the new circumstances. The first acts of the new Government clearly indicated which path it had chosen.

Ebert's first act as Chancellor, on the evening of November 9, was to make use of the secret telephone line connecting the Chancellery in Berlin with General Headquarters in Spa. He spoke with General Groener, inquiring what were the intentions of the High Command. General Groener informed him that Marshal Hindenburg would stay at the head of the Army until the troops had returned to Germany in good order and discipline. The High Command did not want a struggle with the new Government, whose members they knew to be good German patriots, but preferred understanding and co-operation with it, to ensure tranquillity and security. But this co-operation was not unconditional. This is what Groener said to the head of the Government:

"The Marshal expects the Reich Government to support the corps of officers in maintaining discipline and order in the Army. He expects that the provisioning of the troops should be assured by every means, and that interference with railway traffic should be prevented. The corps of officers assume that the Reich Government will combat Bolshevism and places itself at the Government's disposal for the purpose."

The final sentence amounted to an offer of collaboration with the Government for the purpose of crushing any attempt at real revolution. Ebert signified agreement by his reply: "Will you convey the Government's thanks to the Marshal?"<sup>1</sup> Thus Germany's new course was settled on the day of the Emperor's abdication, and before he had time to cross the Dutch frontier.

Whereas Marshal Hindenburg was not invited to take

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Kabisch, General Groener's biographer (*General-leutnant A. D. Groener*, 1932, R. Kittler Verlag, Leipzig, pp. 70-71) confirms these events, adding the following rather *piquant* detail:

"That conversation introduced a connection between Groener and Ebert that was to become significant. Each night, between 11 and 1, the two men consulted over the telephone. Later a direct line from Ebert's study to that of the Quartermaster-General—independently from Ebert's switchboard—was established, the two men could talk with each other without being overheard."

the oath to the Republic, he on his part obtained from the Government the following telegram :

“ To Marshal Hindenburg.

“ We request you to give the necessary orders to all the armies in the field, so that calm and the most rigorous order should be preserved in all circumstances. Thus the orders of superiors must be strictly carried out until demobilisation. Discharge from the Army can only take place upon the orders of the hierarchic superiors. The superiors must keep their arms and the insignia of their rank. Where Soldiers' Councils have been formed, these must support the officers without reservation in maintaining order and discipline

(Signed) Ebert, Scheidemann, Dittmann, Landsberg, Barth ”<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Government appointed by the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils from the outset of its political career subordinated the Soldiers' Councils to the officers. And it did so upon the demand of the Generalissimo of Imperial Germany.

The motives of the High Command in assuring the “ revolutionary ” Government of its loyal support were later disclosed without any reticence by General Groener himself who, in the course of a political trial which took place in Munich in the autumn of 1925, made the following statements on oath :

“ GROENER : On the evening of the 9th I made an alliance by telephone with the People's Representative, Ebert, to fight against the revolution. We fought together—and I reckon that to my credit—against the revolution from the beginning, and we did it, be it noted, with the initiative in my hands, for the aims that I stood for, and with all the means which I considered suitable to fight against the revolution . . .

“ With this I have concluded my general observations, and I am now ready to answer questions.”

From the cross-examination of General Groener :

“ Rechtsanwalt Dr Hirschberg : So when he spoke of the struggle against the revolution—an expression which, so I am told, has given rise to considerable misunderstanding—the witness meant the struggle against Bolshevism ? ”

“ GROENER . The struggle against Bolshevism which manifested itself in the revolution. In my opinion it was completely out of the question to think of the restoration of the monarchy. The aim of our alliance, which we formed on the evening of November 9th, was to combat the revolution without reservation, to re-establish a lawful government, to lend this government armed support and to convene a National Assembly as soon as possible. That was the aim.”

<sup>1</sup> Haase did not sign this document.

' Rechtsanwalt Count von Pestalozzi. Now that this question has been raised it must be completely cleared up. The witness should tell us exactly what was agreed to between him and Herr Ebert, who later became Reich President, as their joint aim, and what he regarded as the further, possibly separate, aim of Ebert, if he is at all in a position to do so, and what was his own further personal aim. In his main evidence the witness declared, be it remembered, that the whole action was given its aim by him."

"GROENER. On November 9th the High Command had to take a decision as to what it should do. I advised the General Field Marshal not to oppose the revolution with armed force for the moment, because, in view of the temper of the troops, it was to be feared that such armed action would fail. I proposed to him: I consider it necessary that the High Command should ally itself with the Majority Socialists. In my opinion there is no party in Germany at the moment which enjoys sufficient influence amongst the people, and particularly amongst the masses, to establish a government together with the High Command. The right-wing parties had completely disappeared, and, of course, any co-operation with the extreme Radicals was out of the question. Nothing remained for the High Command but to conclude this alliance with the Majority Socialists. Naturally, the old Field Marshal did not find that an agreeable solution at all. But as in all his actions he always showed sufficient judgment to put his personal feelings to one side if necessary, he declared himself ready to do it. This alliance and its purpose were set out in a letter which the General Field Marshal wrote to Ebert on—if I am not mistaken—December 8th, 1918<sup>1</sup>. That letter was read in court at Magdeburg during the hearing. I should be glad, however, if you would not bind me down to December 8th as the date, or indeed to any particular date."

<sup>1</sup> Hindenburg's letter was as follows

"Dear Herr Ebert,

"The reason I approach you in the following lines is that it has been reported to me that you too, as a loyal German, love your Fatherland above all else, setting aside personal views and desires, as I myself have had to do, in order to be equal to the distress of the Fatherland. It was in this sense that I have allied myself with you to save our people from the threatening collapse. I would like to remind you of your Appeal of November 9, in which you said.

"The new Reich Government can carry out its task only if all authorities and officials in the towns as well as in the country offer them a helping hand. I know that many people will find it difficult to work with the new men who have undertaken to lead the Reich, but I appeal to their love for our people. Failure of the organisation in this difficult hour would expose Germany to anarchy and the gravest misery.

"Help the Fatherland, with me, each man at his post, until the time comes when he is relieved."

"The destiny of the German people has been placed into your hands. It will depend on your decision whether the German people will yet attain to a new revival. I am prepared, and so is the whole of the Army, to support you in this without any reservations. We all know that in view of this regrettable outcome of the war the reconstruction of the Reich can only take place in accordance with new principles and in new forms. What we want is that the recovery of the State should not be delayed for a generation through the complete destruction of every prop of our economic and social life owing to delusion and folly."

(*sd.* v Hindenburg)

"What were our immediate aims? The first was, as far as possible, to get the army out of the atmosphere of revolution. Whether we should succeed in doing that was, of course, very problematical. On the evening of the 9th we came to an agreement for the moment, for the next few days only. We always got into telephonic touch with each other between eleven o'clock in the evening and one o'clock in the morning from the Reich Chancellery to the Headquarters of the High Command, always in agreement with the General Field-Marshal, and discussed the situation from day to day according to developments."

*Signing of the Armistice—Conservative Policy of Revolutionary Government—"The German Army has not been Vanquished . . ."—Grzesinski Affirms his Loyalty to Hindenburg—The True Revolutionaries—"Militarism in Germany is Finished for Ever . . ."*

Meanwhile, the Allies were convinced that the Emperor's abdication marked the beginning of a new, democratic and peaceful Germany, with the power of the pillars of the old régime—the Junkers, big industrialists, officers and Prussian bureaucrats—broken for ever.

This hope, which later events failed to justify, together with their haste to have done with hostilities, caused the Allied statesmen and generals to ignore the view of General Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the American forces, who, from October 25, pronounced himself against the conclusion of an armistice with Germany and for the continuation of hostilities until Germany capitulated. He concluded a Note addressed to the Supreme War Council of the Allies with the following words:

"Finally, I believe the complete victory can only be obtained by continuing the war until we force unconditional surrender from Germany, but if the Allied Governments decide to grant an armistice, the terms should be so rigid that under no circumstances could Germany again take up arms."

General Pershing's idea, rejected in 1918, did not triumph until 1943, in the Resolution adopted at Casablanca by the President of the United States and the British Prime Minister.

On November 11, 1918, at Marshal Foch's General Headquarters at Compiègne, Erzberger signed the Armis-



tion. The advance of the Allied armies was halted.<sup>1</sup> Germany, thanks to the change of régime, escaped the danger of total occupation of her territory.

Before authorizing Erzberger to sign the Armistice, the German Government had invited the views of the Supreme Command. In reply, Hindenburg sent a telegram to the Minister of War, General von Scheuch, suggesting some modifications in the Allied terms. However, he hastened to add, at the end of his telegram: "If it is impossible to gain this, it would nevertheless be advisable to conclude the agreement." It was on the basis of this telegram, which was dated November 10, that the Government authorized Erzberger to sign the Armistice. Thus the Supreme Command bore the responsibility not only for the decision to ask for an Armistice, but also for the decision to sign it.

While being in league with the High Command, the new Government also allowed another mainstay of the old régime, the bureaucracy, to impose collaboration upon it. The State Secretaries of moderate views inherited from the imperial régime were left at the head of all the ministerial departments, as Solf at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Scheuch at the Ministry of War (later replaced by Colonel Reinhardt), Admiral von Mann at the Admiralty, Dr Krause at the Ministry of Justice, and Schiffer at the Ministry of Finance. These men were, in general, in sympathy with the parties of the Right and Centre, and were profoundly conservative at heart. They did all they could to introduce a moderate rhythm into the work of the Government, smothering all revolutionary impetus with red tape. They rendered a considerable service to the spirit of the old régime, preserving the *cadres* of old officials and admitting into them only a small percentage of new elements, mostly selected from among moderate Socialists.

The Government did not touch the Junkers and the

<sup>1</sup> In that connexion it is of some interest to recall what Sir Sidney Low wrote in the January 1919 issue of the *Fortnightly Review*. There was no soldier and hardly any civilian, according to him, who did "not regret that hostilities were allowed to cease on November 11. If they had been prolonged for a few weeks or even a few days, the war would have been carried to Berlin by an unprecedented aerial bombardment, and the German armies of the West, utterly disorganised and partially outflanked, would have either been destroyed or compelled to deliver up their arms in a surrender which would have dwarfed Sedan."

industrial magnates, either. Though the peasants, particularly east of the Elbe, expected a distribution of land, the large estates remained intact. The Government did not touch them. Land Reform, which was the first social measure to be announced in 1918 by various Central European governments, was never either announced or carried out by the German Republic.

As to the industrialists, they did not suffer, either, through their treatment by the Revolutionary Government. They realized that the time was not propitious for them to make an immediate attempt to regain the political influence they had wielded under the Empire. They waited patiently. The Government, on the other hand, did not even contemplate nationalising industry or subjecting it to rigorous control. It contented itself with proclaiming the eight-hour working day, like all other governments in Europe.

The American author, F. L. Schuman, gave the following severe, yet far from unjust definition of the role played by the German Socialists after the Revolution: "The actual role of Social Democracy was to suppress incipient proletarian revolt and to save feudalism and capitalism from destruction."<sup>1</sup>

The High Command, taking advantage of the full powers granted by the Government to Marshal Hindenburg, seized control of the Soldiers' Councils of the armies at the front. The representatives of these Councils, in their interviews with the High Command, which took place at Wilhelmshoehe (Cassel) where General Headquarters had been transferred on November 15, at first tried to impose political supervision on the corps of officers, but, confronted with the telegram of the People's Commissars to the Marshal, they lost face, for they knew that the Commissars were an emanation of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. They bowed before the order of the Government, and on November 17 they gave evidence of their willingness to collaborate with the officers by publishing an appeal for discipline, as follows:

"Comrades of the Armies in the West,

"Maintain order and discipline in your ranks throughout the duration of the retreat! Above all, it is indispensable that rail traffic

<sup>1</sup> Frederick L. Schuman, *Germany since 1918*, 1937, N Y, Henry Noel Company, p 16.

should not be hindered, that food trams and depots should be kept intact, and that arms and equipment should not be damaged. Wherever unscrupulous comrades act in contravention of these instructions, the Soldiers' Councils of the Army must vigorously intervene. None but the most severe penalties will repress such criminal practices "

On November 24, the Soldiers' Councils at the front went still further. In a Proclamation addressed to the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils within Germany, they said :

" To the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of the Homeland . Comrades and Workers ! After an arduous struggle our brave brothers are returning home, not as victors, but not as the vanquished, either ! . "

Somewhat surprisingly, the Proclamation of the Soldiers' Councils at the front had adopted the idea of an undefeated German Army from the Crown Prince's last Proclamation to his Army Group. This is what the Crown Prince said on November 11, thirteen days before the Soldiers' Councils :

" H.M. the Kaiser having resigned the Supreme Command, I too am compelled by circumstances, now that arms are at rest, to resign the leadership of my Army Group . . . The Army Group has not been defeated with arms. We have been overcome by hunger and bitter need. My Army Group may leave with its head raised high the soil of France, which has been conquered with the best German blood. Its escutcheon and military honour are spotless and clean . . .

The Commander-in-Chief, Wilhelm, Crown Prince  
of the German Reich and Prussia "

Thanks to the support of the Government, the authority and prestige of the High Command were saved, despite the military defeat. Demobilisation and the return of the troops from the front remained in the hands of the officers.

The feelings of deference that continued to animate the Socialists in their relations with the Supreme Command were reflected in a Proclamation issued by the Social Democrat, A. Grzesinski, at this time President of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Cassel, who later became Prussian Minister of Interior and Police President of Berlin. This Proclamation, issued on the occasion of the transfer of General Headquarters from Spa to Wilhelmsheide, overflowed with enthusiasm for the Marshal : " Hindenburg is fulfilling his duty to-day in a manner which endears him to us as never before. Hindenburg belongs to the German nation." Thus the new Republic, which boasted of being anti-militarist, began by singing the praises of the generals of the Empire.

However, there were in Germany some truly revolutionary elements who sincerely wanted to reform her and make her into a progressive country. But they constituted a minority and, as subsequent events showed, such an insignificant one, that they were crushed by the tacit coalition of all those who wanted to save as much as possible of the old order. The true revolutionaries were among the Independent Socialists, the only ones who had had the courage to oppose the imperialism of the old régime during the four years of war. They included several shades of opinion.

Their Left wing was represented by the "Spartakusbund" organization, which was born in 1916, and was led by Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Ernst Meyer. In 1917, after the formation of the Independent Socialist Party, composed of Socialists who could not accept the bellicose policy of the Social Democratic Party and had seceded from it, the "Spartakusbund" joined the Independents, though preserving its autonomous organization.

The revolutionary leaders included people of true courage, as Liebknecht, whom the Revolution had saved from prison, Ledebour, and Rosa Luxemburg in Berlin, and Kurt Eisner, Toller and Landauer in Munich. They had sympathisers within the Central Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. Sometimes they could rely on the support of the three Independent Socialist members of the Government. The other three members of the Government—Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg—(Majority Socialists) were their mortal enemies.

The first few months of the new Republic saw the development of the struggle between the revolutionaries and the Majority Socialists, who wanted to prevent a real revolution at all costs. Behind the Majority Socialists there was formed a coalition of the old pillars of the imperial régime, who were prepared to help Ebert and Scheidemann in their war against the Revolution. The officers, headed by the High Command, were the first to offer their services in this struggle, for they were convinced that the crushing of the radical Left was essential to a future resurrection of the old Germany.

During the first months of the Republic's existence, the new rulers made a great effort to convince the foreign world that German militarism had been crushed for ever. On November 14, 1918, the Workers' and Soldiers' Council of Berlin addressed a Manifesto to the peoples of France, Italy, Great Britain and America, stating this in so many words :

"For four years the world war has divided the nations into two hostile camps. Millions of human lives have been lost and countless cultural assets have been destroyed. All nations have a burning desire for peace . . . The other nations no longer have anything to fear from the free Germany. Like the policy of violence at home, so the policy of violence towards other countries shall be over for ever. Never again shall German militarism raise its head. . ."

However, the Workers' and Soldiers' Council expected the workers of the Allied countries to take their word for it and exert pressure on their Governments with a view to ensuring for Germany a peace that left the Allied victory out of account. The Manifesto went on :

"However, the restoration of Germany, which is bleeding from a thousand wounds, the reconstruction of her economic and political life, and the salvation of the people from hunger, privation and other miseries, is impossible if intolerably hard armistice and peace terms are imposed upon her by the Entente Governments. . . We ask the peoples to do everything in their power, so that the coming peace shall be a peace of brotherly understanding, without any annexations and oppressions, a peace that will leave every people the right of self-determination and free development . . . Workers of France, Britain, Italy, etc., you have frequently promised that you are aiming at such a peace. See to it now that your promise should become a fact. Advocate the mitigation of the Armistice terms, which expose Germany to economic ruin and death by starvation. . . . As representatives of the Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, we raise our voice to ask you to see to it that the German people should not be condemned to a life of slavery by your Governments . . .

The Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils  
Brutus Molkenbuhr, Rich. Mueller."

The same assurances were given by the Socialist Deputy, Hoch, on April 9, 1919, in a speech delivered in the National Assembly :

" . . . If the intention of the enemy peoples to violate us springs from the fear that militarism might again become strong in Germany, then that is a wrong calculation . . ."

However, a different note was struck by the Independent Socialist, Daeumig, who, on December 18, 1918, at the

Plenary Congress of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, did not hesitate to declare: "It is an illusion to think that militarism has already been eliminated. The spirit is very much alive, even in this room." A bitter declaration, but sincere and fairly true, considering that the majority of the Congress was composed of Majority Socialists, who certainly did not detest the Army, and were collaborating with the generals.

*Varying Attitude of Soldiers at the Front—Ebert Sanctions Legend of Unvanquished German Army—Soldiers Detach themselves from Corps of Officers—Berlin Workers' Revolt Drowned in Blood by Socialist Government in Collusion with Supreme Command—In Protest, Independent Socialists Pass into Opposition*

Immediately upon the conclusion of the Armistice, the Army of the West set out for Germany, where it was to be demobilised. The vast movement of troops was directed by the Supreme Command, which was assisted in this difficult and complicated task by the Soldiers' Councils at the front. So harmonious was this collaboration that on November 19, the Soldiers' Council handed to the High Command a note addressed to Ebert, protesting against the revolutionary goings-on in Berlin and demanding the urgent convocation of a Constituent Assembly. This demand was most agreeable to the Majority Socialists, who saw in the Constituent Assembly the only means of escaping a real revolution, liquidating the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, and maintaining the existing order.

However, the confidence between the front soldiers and the High Command did not survive the Congress of delegates of all the Front Soldiers' Councils, which took place on December 1, at Ems. The Independent Socialists, headed by Barth, succeeded in infusing the Congress with a new spirit and inspiring confidence in the Central Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, which had its headquarters in Berlin. The soldiers of the front, following the example of their comrades at home, detached themselves from their officers. Yielding to the influence of the Independent Socialists, and despite the efforts of the High Command, they returned home, imbued with a vague

revolutionary spirit. The High Command could no longer rely on them to smother the revolution and destroy the influence of the Central Committee. This was a defeat for the High Command, but also for the leaders of the Majority Socialists.

The High Command repeatedly suggested to Ebert to use the troops at the front to disarm the civil population, dissolve the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, and restore order. It did so before the Congress at Ems, and again during the first days of December. On December 9, Marshal Hindenburg himself wrote a solemn letter to Ebert, reminding him that :

" . . . when, on November 9, the corps of officers placed itself at his (Ebert's) disposal, it was in the conviction that its loyalty and devotion would earn for it the gratitude of the Fatherland and the support of the new Government. Now the authority of the corps is daily being whittled down. It is not possible to gain control of events, unless every means is used to restore the prestige of the officers and expel the Soldiers' Councils from the Army." The letter concluded with these words : " The fate of the German people lies in your hands. The resurgence of the German people depends on your determination. I wish you the necessary energy to act with decision and fervour."

However, despite his sympathy with the aims pursued by the Supreme Command, Ebert realized that he must proceed with caution, for the Congress of Ems had shown that it was no longer possible to rely on the front soldiers. In the circumstances any rash action might compromise the Government and place power into the hands of the revolutionary elements.

The only concession that was made to the Supreme Command was to issue a decree imposing severe penalties for illicit possession of arms. The object of this decree was to hasten the disarmament of the civil population, but it did not produce the desired results.

Thus no advance arrangements had been made between the Supreme Command and the Government for the day on which the troops from the front were to enter Berlin. That event took place on December 11. The soldiers were welcomed at the Brandenburger Tor by Ebert with these words :

" I salute you who have returned from the field of battle unvanquished." Then he went on : " No enemy has overcome you. It was only when the enemy's superiority in men and material had become increasingly

oppressive that we gave up the struggle . . . You may return with your heads held high. Never have men performed a greater feat than you have done. In the name of the German people—profound thanks; and once more. Welcome home. . . . Upon you, above all, rests the hope of German freedom. You are the strongest bearers of the German future . . .”<sup>1</sup>

These boastful words of the Socialist head of the revolutionary Government, though entirely contrary to the truth, gave birth to the legend that was one day to raise Hitler to power. A version of them was repeated on December 12, by the Prussian Minister of War, General von Scheuch: “If ever anybody should affirm that the German Army was beaten in this war, History will call it a lie. Let the consciousness of having returned home undefeated never be taken from you . . . !”

Upon their return to their respective home-towns, the troops wanted only one thing—demobilisation. The High Command, with rage in its heart, was compelled for the moment to abandon its ambitious plans and to agree to discharge the troops instead of using them against the Revolution. In any case, the moral of the soldiers continued to deteriorate, their sympathies clearly evolving towards the extreme Left. Indeed, the Congress of Soldiers’ and Workers’ Councils which opened on December 16 in Berlin, passed a Resolution that was distinctly hostile to the officers:

“1. The supreme command of the Army and Navy shall be entrusted to the People’s Commissars and the Central Committee. In the garrisons the command shall be in the hands of the local Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils.

“2. As a symbolical expression of the abolition of militarism and mechanical obedience, all insignia of rank shall be abolished, and the bearing of arms, except on duty, shall be prohibited.

“3. The Soldiers’ Councils shall be responsible for the good conduct of the troops and for the maintenance of discipline

“4. There are no longer any superiors, except on duty.

“5. The soldiers themselves shall appoint their own leaders.

“6. Former officers who have retained the confidence of the majority of their troops may be re-elected.

“7. The abolition of the standing army and the creation of a Civic Guard shall be accelerated.”

<sup>1</sup> The lead given by Ebert to the German people was immediately taken up by political parties. For instance, the German People’s Party declared in an electoral proclamation of January 1919

“We did not lose the war because we were defeated in the field, but because the home front, long undermined by systematic agitation, had broken down.”



Ebert saved the situation by persuading the Congress, despite the opposition of the Independent Socialists, to pass a motion concerning elections to the Constituent Assembly, the date being fixed for January 19, 1919.

However, the High Command felt so menaced by the Resolution that Groener, upon Hindenburg's orders, rang up Ebert on the telephone, threatening with civil war. Ebert succeeded in appeasing the generals and even in getting General Groener to come to Berlin. He arrived on December 20, accompanied by Major von Schleicher, his right-hand man. Ebert arranged an interview between them and representatives of the Central Committee of the Councils, and succeeded by sheer argument in wresting from the latter a decision amounting to a *sine die* deferment of the implementation of the Resolution of December 16. The officers were once again saved by the skill of Ebert.

But this time the Independent Socialists and the Spartacists reacted. They put Berlin's revolutionary elements on their guard against the sabotaging of the decision of the Congress of Councils. Indignation was so strong that on December 23 a *coup* was made against the Government. The revolutionary sailors established in Berlin, and organized in a so-called civic division, surrounded the Chancellery and took Ebert prisoner. It seemed as though the Government were lost and the Revolution saved.

Then Ebert, unbeknown to the sailors, lifted the receiver of his secret telephone and got into direct touch with Cassel, imploring the High Command to save the Government. The joyous reply was that General Lequis, commanding the troops at Potsdam, would receive orders to march on Berlin; and this happened the following day.

There was a precedent to the ensuing street fighting in Berlin in a riot that had broken out on December 6. At a demonstration held by Spartacist workers on that day, Wels, the military governor of Berlin, himself a Majority Socialist, called out the troops, who fired on the crowd, sixteen persons being killed. No wonder, then, that on December 23 the anger of the Red sailors should have been directed not only against the Government, but also against Wels, who was severely mishandled. On December 24, regular battles took place in the streets of Berlin between

Red sailors and workers on the one hand, and the soldiers on the other. General Lequis, acting on behalf of the Government, did not hesitate to use even artillery against the workers' quarters. It was only the weariness of the soldiers, who wanted to be demobilised as quickly as possible and did not relish the role of counter-revolutionaries, that prevented Ebert and the High Command from completely suppressing all Left opposition on December 24. The fighting, as General Groener said later, ceased for lack of combatants, General Lequis's soldiers tending to fraternise with the workers of Berlin. At the funeral of the sailors killed on December 24, the workers carried posters bearing the just accusation: "We accuse Ebert, Landsberg and Scheidemann of having murdered these sailors!"

The workers did not mention the names of the three Independent Socialist members of the Government, because the latter had not been consulted and the intervention of the troops had been arranged without their knowledge. On December 29, these three—Haase, Dittman and Barth—in fact resigned, as a protest against the counter-revolutionary policy of the Majority Socialists. From then on the Government was composed entirely of Majority Socialists, and its policy of collaboration with the High Command could proceed without let or hindrance. This constituted a great victory for the High Command. At the same time, the events of December 24 had taught it that it could no longer rely on the full support of the soldiers of the old Army, who had shown a distinct tendency to yield to the influence of revolutionary circles. The idea of a *coup de force* to be carried out by the old Army had to be abandoned, and the High Command resigned itself to the complete demobilisation of the troops which were melting away, and began to forge for itself a new instrument—the Volunteer Corps.

The Independent Socialists who had resigned from the Government gave the following explanation of their decision:

"The Government crisis that has now been solved at bottom began the very day the Government was formed . . . However, since then differences of opinion on important questions relating to home and foreign policy became aggravated. The trustfulness of the Majority

Socialists towards the Supreme Command has led them to accept most of the proposals coming from that direction without examination. This has again strengthened the power of the old militarists. . . . The Central Council . . . backed Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg, although they themselves, to the surprise of their Independent colleagues, admitted that on the night of December 24, at 1 a m, they had given the War Minister unlimited instructions to do everything in order to save Wels, and were therefore guilty of the monstrous cannonade against Schloss and Marstall, and of the consequent bloodshed. With that the political moment at which the Independents had to leave the Cabinet had arrived."

The question poses itself whether it was not a mistake on the part of the Independent Socialists, in November, to associate themselves with the Majority Socialists in forming the first Republican Government, considering that they themselves had denounced the Majority Socialists as loyal supporters of the old régime. Ledebour frankly said so to his colleagues a few days before their resignation (on December 20, 1918, at the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils):

"... You must not expect us to march with people who are the principal culprits in connection with the war policy, with Scheidemann, Ebert, and Landsberg, who to the very last moment did everything to keep the bourgeois-capitalist Government at the helm. The majority of my friends will now realise that it was one of the worst errors of our friends to enter the Cabinet together with those discredited men, with these deliberate promoters of war"

*Noske Accepts Post of Executioner—Solf Resigns—The Volunteer Corps—Supreme Command Creates New Anti-Revolutionary Army with Socialist Support*

The new Government was composed of five members: Ebert, Scheidemann, Landsberg, Wissell and Noske. Noske was to play the leading part in the violent suppression of the revolutionary movements. He took the portfolio of National Defence, immediately establishing close co-operation with the High Command. He was determined to drown the Revolution in blood. When accepting his new post, he said to his colleagues in the Government: "All right. Someone must play the bloodhound; I am not afraid of the responsibility."<sup>1</sup> He played his part without scruple. He and Ebert were the principal gravediggers of the Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Gustav Noske, *Von Kiel bis Kapp*, p. 68.

The High Command had unlimited confidence in this People's Commissar (!) for National Defence. The officers knew about his attitude in the Reichstag, where, during the war, he had been one of the most militaristic members of the Majority Socialist Party, enjoying the confidence of the Supreme Command for that reason.

Noske, at the suggestion of the Prussian War Minister, Colonel Reinhardt, was also given supreme command over the troops in the Berlin area. In this dual capacity, he placed at the disposal of the High Command the necessary funds to form the Volunteer Corps, who were progressively to replace the units of the old Army.

It should be noted that at this time, Solf, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, inherited by the Republican Government from the Imperial régime, was replaced by a far more prominent man—Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, former Minister of Imperial Germany in Copenhagen.

Solf's resignation was forced upon the Government by the Independent Socialists. He had been attacked by Kurt Eisner, who accused him, together with the Majority Socialist, Eduard David, of having burnt the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relating to the responsibility of the Imperial régime for the outbreak of war. Eisner, in fact, severed relations with the Reich Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a sign of mistrust. Haase joined the critics of Solf, who was, on the other hand, vigorously defended by Ebert. The conflict ended with Solf's resignation; he was appointed Ambassador to Tokio in 1920.

As to the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, he had already stated the conditions on which he was prepared to accept the post in a confidential letter he sent to Scheidemann on December 9, 1918, from Copenhagen. These conditions bore a singular resemblance to those of the Supreme Command, notably:

"Authority must be supported in a manner visible to the whole of Germany, as well as to foreign countries, and this must be done as quickly and thoroughly as the dangerous disjointedness of conditions in Germany imperatively demands. The speediest convocation of the National Assembly is an indispensable prerequisite for this. I would ask that this should take place before February 16, 1919 . . . Further, I regard as one of the most important tasks that must be taken in hand immediately, the restoration and consolidation of our credit. . . . We want peace, and we must therefore do everything that will render possible

a peace that will guarantee our existence. Part of this—and this is self-evident if the implications of the above mentioned points are examined—is the restoration of an armed force, that is, the establishment of a Republican Army.”<sup>1</sup>

General Lequis's place was taken by General von Luettwitz, who became Commander-in-Chief of the military area of North Germany. When General Lequis's troops had proved to be incapable of mopping up Berlin's Red elements, who, after the events of December 23-24, continued to be dominated by the extreme Left, the High Command, as already mentioned, decided on complete demobilisation of the old Army and the formation of a new Army composed of volunteers.

Practically everywhere in defeated Germany there were men in need of employment who detested the new régime and whose only dream was to goose-step again. The High Command entrusted the generals and other high-ranked officers with the task of enlisting such men. The idea of Volunteer Corps came from General Maercker, commanding the 214th Infantry Division, which was garrisoned in Westphalia. On December 14, he issued an Order of the Day, creating the first Volunteer Corps of light infantry for the purpose of "maintaining order at home and defending the frontiers of the Reich." This Order of the Day was approved by the High Command, which in fact adopted it as the model for other free corps. The intention of the High Command was that these free corps should be used, above all, to fight the revolutionary Left, that is, for purposes of civil war. This intention was reflected in the choice of *cadres*, the structure of the units, and even in the tactics prescribed. Here is what General Maercker himself said on the subject:

"To provide for the fighting we should have to do within the country, I decided to create a large number of small mixed formations. I did not want to have to improvise them on the spur of the moment. I therefore carried my method right through. By including in each company a heavy machine-gun section and a mine-thrower section, I rendered them capable of meeting all the contingencies of civil war victoriously.”<sup>2</sup>

It is a monstrous fact that the generals were provided

<sup>1</sup> See Brockdorff-Rantzau, *Dokumente*, Charlottenburg, 1920, p. 7-10.

<sup>2</sup> Maercker, *Vom Reichsheer zur Reichswehr*.

with the finance required to create this counter-revolutionary army by the Socialist Government. The expenditure involved was very heavy, for the volunteers were offered generous terms: the pay was from five to ten marks per day, according to whether the volunteer was serving in the interior or at the frontier, plus a monthly premium of thirty marks; the diet was guaranteed to include two hundred grammes of meat and seventy-five grammes of butter each day; while family allowances were maintained and the period of service in the Volunteer Corps counted for worker's and peasant's pensions. At the expiration of their period of service the volunteers were to receive the gratuity granted to all soldiers on demobilisation.

At the express request of the Government, the first Volunteer Corps were assembled round Berlin and placed by the High Command at the disposal of General von Luettwitz.

The political situation following the events of December 1918 was correctly described by General Groener, on oath, in the course of a trial that took place in 1925:

"After December 24, Herr Ebert called on Herr Noske to lead the troops against the Spartacists. In the meantime, the volunteer detachments were assembling and the struggle against the Spartacists could go on. The People's Representative, Noske—if I am not mistaken he was one of the People's Representatives at the time—has already given his evidence here. I wish to say only one thing more. The political aim Herr Ebert had in view in those days when the troops were marching in, and when afterwards the affair with the sailors happened, an aim which he discussed with me, was the expulsion of the Independents from the provisional Government. That was one aim. Another was the safeguarding of the National Assembly. He requested my assistance for both these aims, and I gave him the support he needed. They were the two political aims we had in view. First of all out with the Independents. In my opinion he brought that about with a skill greater than any ever shown in anything any Reich Chancellor ever accomplished. In my opinion he was so clever and so skilful that one had to respect his political genius highly. Afterwards the National Assembly went off quite well, though there was one incident with the Soldiers' Councils. Once the National Assembly was established, a secure basis had been laid down."

*Conflict between Independent Socialists and Spartacists on the one Hand, and Majority Socialists on the Other—Workers' Demonstrations in Berlin—Noske and the Generals Conquer Berlin, Organize Massacres — Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg Murdered by Volunteers — Karl Liebknecht's Brother Demands Justice — Government Refuses—Towards Restoration of a Militarist, Aggressive Germany*

After the events of December 23-24, the German capital seemed to be in the hands of the Left-wing revolutionaries. The Army had disappeared from the streets, and there were processions demonstrating against the Government. The principal newspapers, the postal service, the telegraphs and railways were in the hands of the Spartacists<sup>1</sup> or the Independents. It seemed as though the Government was being swept away by the Revolution. However, the leaders of the revolutionary movement were deliberating endlessly, without coming to any decision. They lost precious time, which was exploited by the Government to create the first Volunteer Corps and concentrate them round Berlin. Already on January 4, 1919, Ebert and Noske were able to inspect, thirty miles from Berlin, the Volunteers of General Maercker. They were delighted to see real soldiers again, and Noske remarked to Ebert: "Don't worry; now you'll see a turn of the wheel . . ." <sup>2</sup> He was right; the wheel was now turning towards counter-revolution—to the great joy of the Socialist Government.

On January 3, 1919, after the resignation of their representatives from the Reich Government, the Independent Socialists also left the Prussian Government. They announced this decision in a public statement, from which we quote the following extracts :

"When the Deputies of the Independent Social Democratic Party resigned because they realised that they could no longer collaborate with Ebert, Landsberg, and Scheidemann without endangering the Revolution and Socialism, we too were confronted with the question whether we could continue to stay in office . . .

"The impossibility of our continuing in the Prussian Government was demonstrated in a direct manner yesterday, when we were required

<sup>1</sup> On December 30, 1918, the Spartacists definitely broke away from the Independents, forming a separate party called the German Communist Party. Their daily paper was the *Rote Fahne*.

<sup>2</sup> Maercker, *Op. cit.*, p. 64.

to agree to the appointment of Colonel Reinhardt as War Minister without any inquiry. . . . We therefore hereby resign from our respective offices."

On January 4, the Government dismissed from his post the Berlin Police-President Eichhorn, an Independent Socialist, who enjoyed the confidence of the workers. This provoked profound anger among the Independents and Communists. They issued the following joint Proclamation : "Workers ! Comrades ! The Ebert Government with its accomplices in the Prussian Ministry is seeking to uphold its power with the bayonet, and to secure for itself the favour of the capitalist bourgeoisie, whose interests it has always secretly supported. The blow that has fallen upon the Chief of the Berlin Police was in reality aimed at the whole German proletariat, at the whole German revolution. Workers ! Comrades ! This cannot, must not be tolerated ! Up, therefore, to a mighty demonstration ! Show the oppressors your power to-day, prove to them that the revolutionary spirit of the November days is not yet dead in you. Meet to-day, Sunday, at two o'clock, in the Siegesallee to form a mass demonstration ! Come in your thousands ! Your freedom, your future, the fate of the Revolution are at stake. Down with the tyranny of Ebert and Scheidemann, of Hirsch, and Ernst !<sup>1</sup> Long live international revolutionary Socialism ! "

The workers responded to this appeal. On January 5 and 6, there were some most impressive, but nevertheless sterile demonstrations, for the leaders of the movement were unable to make up their minds to drive the Government out and seize power themselves. Was this timidity due to incapacity on the part of Germans to oppose by force an established Government ? At all events, it would be difficult to dispute the following view, expressed later in the *Rote Fahne* :

"What Berlin saw on that day was probably the greatest proletarian demonstration in history. . . . The proletariat were massed, shoulder to shoulder. They had brought their arms, and were waving their red banners. They were ready to do anything, give anything, even their lives. It was an army of two hundred thousand men. . . . Then something unheard-of happened. The masses were feverishly impatient : they demanded an act or a word to relieve the tension, but none knew what act or word : for the leaders were deliberating. . . . They were in session all evening, remained in session all night. . . . They were deliberating, deliberating, deliberating. . . . No ! Those masses were not ripe to take power, otherwise they would of their own accord have appointed a few leaders, and their first revolutionary act would have been to break into police headquarters and force their official leaders to make an end of deliberations once for all."

<sup>1</sup> Ernst and Hirsch were Prussian Ministers and belonged to the Majority Socialist Party.



Meanwhile, the Government gave the order for the troops and Volunteer Corps to march on Berlin ! On the morning of January 10, Noske's colleagues gave him full military powers to carry out the conquest of the capital. On January 11, the Volunteers commanded by Noske entered Berlin. The capital was conquered after some bloody battles ; thousands of workers perished in the street fighting, while hundreds of others were captured and summarily executed. By January 15, the Volunteers were masters of the city. Under the sympathetic eyes of Noske, they now organized a veritable man-hunt. The workers' quarters were subjected to domiciliary visits, and the workers were shot in batches of from fifteen to twenty people without trial. The two Communist leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, were arrested on the evening of January 15, and taken to the headquarters of horse guards at the Hotel Eden. After a brief interrogation they were sent under escort to the Moabit prison. Liebknecht was taken out first. As he was leaving the hotel one of the sentries at the entrance struck him two blows on the head with the butt of his rifle. Covered with blood, Liebknecht was put into a motor car. On arrival at the Tiergarten, the leader of the escort stopped the car, made Liebknecht get out and ordered him to continue the journey on foot. As he turned his back on the escort they riddled him with revolver bullets. The leader of the escort then delivered the body at a first aid post as that of an unknown person. Thus the man who had had the courage to put up a vigorous opposition to German militarism ever since August 4, 1914, became a martyr to his convictions.

Rosa Luxemburg was conducted out of the hotel shortly after Liebknecht. The same sentry half killed her with the butt of his rifle. She was then placed into a car and shot in the head with a revolver *en route*. Her body was thrown into a canal, from which it was not recovered until some months later.

The Government not only gave the order to conquer Berlin by force of arms, not only used a counter-revolutionary force to crush the Left, but went so far as to allow the Volunteers to run amok. Many workers were executed without trial, and without the Government making any attempt to stop the slaughter.

Moreover, the Government restored the courts-martial, and it was to them that it left the action against the murderers of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Karl Liebknecht's brother, upon learning that the soldiers who had murdered him were to be tried by a court-martial of the horse guards to which they belonged, that is, by their comrades, so that they would probably go unpunished, protested against this decision of the Government in an open letter, which we reproduce below :

" Berlin, January 16, 1919.

" To the Editor of the ' Republik,'  
Berlin.

" Despite our protest, the ' Social Democratic ' Government has entrusted the inquiry into the murder of my brother Karl and Comrade Rosa Luxemburg to the military authorities. On behalf of the family I most emphatically protest against this before the world. The charge concerns a crime of militarism and every military authority is therefore an interested party ! For this reason we now demand that the inquiry should at all costs be taken out of the hands of the military authority. . . .

" If the Reich Government relies in its refusal on the existing formal law, it forgets that it and the Central Council possess the supreme legislative power. And it further forgets that the abolition of military administration of justice is one of the oldest demands of Social Democracy. . . .

Theodor Liebknecht."

However, the Government adhered to its decision. The result was as foreseen by Theodor Liebknecht. All the accused were acquitted—all but one, who was sentenced to two years' imprisonment but given every facility to escape.<sup>1</sup>

The lamentable spectacle of collaboration between the Socialist Government and the officers moved Haase, leader of the Independent Socialists, to remark, in a letter written to a friend on January 16, 1919 :

" The same Landsberg, Ebert, and Scheidemann who represented themselves as the guardians of legality, are allowing the soldateska, which they have made up of old officer and non-commissioned officer

<sup>1</sup> F. L. Schuman, in his *Germany since 1918* (p. 30), writes in this connection :

" Noske gathered troops and ordered an artillery assault on the Spartacists' strongholds in Berlin on January 11. Four days later Liebknecht and Luxemburg were arrested, ' taken for a ride ' in the Tiergarten and murdered. Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske approved the acquittal of the culprits. Other Spartacist leaders were shot in the ' white terror ' which the Social Democrats instigated. The trade unions and the masses of workers remained inert. The radicals were confounded and helpless."

One of Noske's colleagues, Albert Grzesinski (*Inside Germany*, New York, 1939, p. 91) while defending Noske's policy, is nevertheless obliged to admit that " Noske's policy in effect sowed the seeds of counter-revolution."

elements and scions of the bourgeoisie, and which they have incited, to prevail. That can lead to no good."<sup>1</sup>

It is no exaggeration to say that the fate of the Revolution was sealed by the Berlin fighting in January. Someone has said that it was the German Revolution's Battle of the Marne. In any case, the radical Left had been crushed. The fires of the Revolution in the provinces were extinguished in the same way during the succeeding months. The Socialist Government triumphed, but behind their backs it was the officers that were triumphant, and they now applied themselves to the task of turning the wheel—to use Noske's phrase—ever faster, towards the restoration of the old militarist and aggressive Germany.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kurt Caro and Walter Oehme, *Schleicher's Aufstieg, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gegenrevolution*. Rowohlt, Berlin, 1933, p. 272

<sup>2</sup> A German writer summed up the situation in this lapidary sentence: "The Kaiser is going—the generals remain"

## CHAPTER VI

### FIRST STEPS OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC. THE PEACE TREATY. THE CONSTITUTION.

*Elections to Constituent Assembly—Dissolution of Central Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils —  
"Democracy in Germany Assured more than in any other Country . . ."*

The elections to the National Assembly took place on January 19. The results were to a considerable extent determined by the events of the first half of January. The revolutionary *élan* of the masses had been definitely crushed. They had lost faith in their leaders. It was the parties of the Right and the Centre that profited by this fact. Here are the election results: (the Communists abstained from participation in the elections)—

German National People's Party (German Nationals)	42
German People's Party (People's Party) ... ..	21
Christian People's Party (Centre) ... ..	88
German Democratic Party (Democrats) ... ..	75
Social Democratic Party (Majority Socialists) ...	163
Independent Social Democratic Party (Ind. Socialists)	22
Minor Parties ... ..	10

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421

The political result of the elections was accurately summed up by the following two contemporary comments:

*Taegliche Rundschau*: "A survey of the election figures shows, as even *Vorwaerts* admits, an undeniable heavy tilt towards the Right since November 9."

*Muenchner Neueste Nachrichten*: "The most noteworthy result of the election has been that the two Social Democratic Parties together have not attained an absolute majority even of the votes polled which, in view of the proportional principle, the number of candidates elected led one to expect."

The elections were a disappointment to the Majority Socialists, who had expected to have an absolute majority in the Assembly. Finding themselves in the minority, and not wishing to continue their collaboration with the

Independent Socialists, they decided to revert to the coalition that had supported the Government of Prince Max of Baden, that is, to renew collaboration with the Centre and Democrats. This collaboration had been going on in a camouflaged form during November, December and January, for the State Secretaries—the heads of the different Ministerial Departments—had been recruited from among men who were in sympathy with the Centre, the Democrats and, frequently, even with the parties further to the Right.

The Constituent Assembly was convoked in Weimar—on the advice of Noske, who was not yet sure of the feeling of the capital. Before it met, volunteer corps under the command of General Maercker were sent to Weimar. These counter-revolutionary troops were charged with the task of protecting the deliberations of the first Assembly of the Republic, and they were commanded by a general who had participated in the massacres of Berlin. Was it not an imposture on the part of Ebert's Government to attribute a symbolical meaning to the choice of Weimar? For according to them it signified a break with the spirit of Potsdam and a reversion to the Liberal traditions of Goethe. Flight from the spectre of revolutionary Berlin was camouflaged as homage to the great poet! However, foreign opinion fell into the trap, acclaiming the spirit of Weimar, just as if the volunteer corps mounting guard over the Assembly had not been imbued with the spirit of Potsdam.

The day after the elections the Central Committee of the Councils was liquidated, despite the protests of the Independents and Communists. It resolved its own dissolution in the following terms:

"Relying on the National Assembly to impose its sovereign authority on the country, the Central Committee places into its hands the power which the Committee derives from the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, and expresses the wish that the labours of the Assembly may be crowned with success for the happiness and benefit of the entire German people.

Max Cohen, Hermann Mueller."

With the dissolution of the Central Committee, the Workers' and Sailors' Councils lost their *raison d'être* and entered upon a process of gradual dissolution.

The parties of the Right were feeling far more reassured after the elections for the National Assembly. The People's Party gave public expression to this fact on January 27, when, upon the proposal of G. Stresemann, they sent a birthday telegram to the ex-Kaiser. The telegram, drafted by Stresemann, thanked William II for all he had done for Germany and the German people, and expressed the hope that the German Empire and the Prussian Monarchy would be restored. This arrogant gesture towards the Republic was a clear indication that the November Revolution was now to be regarded as a closed and forgotten incident.

The organization of the landowners (Junkers), "Der Bund der Landwirte," went even further. On February 17, 1919, they adopted the following resolution :

"The Bund der Landwirte regards the Revolution as a disaster, and continues to regard Monarchy as the most suitable form of government for Germany."

In the circumstances one cannot help admiring the optimism of Ebert who, on February 2, 1919, declared to German journalists at Weimar :

"... To-day we are able to say that democracy in Germany is assured to a greater extent than in any other country "

*Formation of the Weimar Majority — Political Spirit of National Assembly—"The German Republic is only a Monarchy Deprived of its Emblems"—Repudiation of the Revolution*

On February 5, the Majority Socialists addressed to the Independent Socialists a purely formal invitation to form a new Government jointly with them. The object was to create justification for coalition with the bourgeois parties, for, of course, in view of the fighting of December and January, the Independents were bound to refuse. However, their note of refusal, dated February 6, was most significant, for it stigmatised the duplicity of the Majority Socialists :

"There can be no question of the Independent Socialist Party's entering the Government until the present tyranny has been abolished and until the members of the Government not only profess their intention to secure the democratic and Socialist achievements of the Revolution against the

middle classes and against military autocracy, but also give practical proof of their determination to give effect to these professions."

The way was now open to form a Coalition Government with the moderate parties. On February 11, Ebert was elected President of the Republic. On February 12, Scheidemann, as Chancellor, formed the new Government which, in addition to six Majority Socialists (Noske as Reichswehr Minister, Landsberg, Wissell, Bauer, David and Schmidt), included three members of the Catholic Centre (one of whom was Erzberger), and three Democrats (one of whom was Preuss, who later drafted the Weimar Constitution). The portfolio of Foreign Affairs was left to Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, a professional diplomat. Chancellor Scheidemann said of him: "We counted him as a Social Democrat, though he was not a member of the Social Democratic Party."<sup>1</sup>

On February 7, the National Assembly elected Dr David (Majority Socialist) as its Speaker, and Herr Fehrenbach (Centre), former Speaker of the Imperial Reichstag, as Deputy Speaker. However, the Centre was not satisfied with this allocation of parliamentary dignities and exerted considerable pressure on the Socialists to give Dr David's post to Fehrenbach. In the end Dr David was given a portfolio in the Scheidemann Government, so that, on February 14, the National Assembly was able to elect Fehrenbach as Speaker. Fehrenbach was a singular choice as Speaker for an Assembly charged with the elaboration of the Republican Constitution, for Fehrenbach in 1918 had publicly protested against the dethronement of the Hohenzollerns, adhering in this to the attitude of his Party which, at a meeting held in Cologne on November 11, 1918, had passed a resolution demanding the maintenance of the dynasty. All this was evidently in accordance with the sentiments of the high Catholic clergy. For example, Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, at a Catholic Congress held in August 1922, violently condemned the Revolution. "The Revolution," he said, "was perjury and high treason, and will go down in history branded for ever with the mark of Cain."

<sup>1</sup> Philip Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, London, 1929, Vol. II., p. 621

The deliberations of the Constituent Assembly left no doubt as to the spirit prevailing in it. The German author who said that "The German Republic was only a Monarchy deprived of its emblems" was not exaggerating. The Right began its parliamentary activities with a eulogy of William II, pronounced by Hans Delbrueck; the Centre held that the Revolution had been pernicious; the Democrats, that it had been useless. These were the sentiments of 236 of the Deputies. The 163 Majority Socialists had already expressed their true attitude in the course of the preceding months through the actions of their representatives—Ebert and Noske. There were only 22 Independent Socialists, a tiny minority, to defend the cause of the Revolution. One of them, Deputy Seger, speaking on April 10, 1919, gave the following apt summary of the political character of the National Assembly:

"The National Assembly is only an inferior edition of the old Reichstag. The working population no longer hopes for anything from the National Assembly. The Socialist firm is dealing in capitalist goods. In reality it is the Centre which provides the stage producers that govern. The partners of the firm are nothing but handymen to the Centre."

In the course of the deliberations concerning the adoption of a new national flag (black-red-gold), Scheidemann said that this was the flag of 1848, the symbol of a Greater Germany and a memento of the glorious time when Austria was part of the Confederation.

### *Organization of the New German Army*

One of the first items on the agenda of the National Assembly was the question of the re-organization of the Army. The first reading of the Government Bill had taken place already on February 25, 1919 (three weeks after the convocation of the Assembly), because all parties, except the Independent Socialists, unanimously recognised the urgency of a new law concerning the armed forces of the Reich. On that occasion, Haase (Independent Socialist) attacked Noske's militarist policy, reproaching him with reversion to the old spirit of conquest. Noske replied with an outburst:

"What! Haase still talks about a war of conquest, when it is absolutely established that Germany fought solely to defend her existence!"



It was thus that a Socialist Minister indignantly repudiated the war responsibility of the Imperial régime.

The Government proposed to base the new army on the volunteer corps organizations, which had in the meanwhile multiplied throughout Germany. It was to consist of 500 thousand men and to cost 6 billion marks, though the old Imperial Army had only cost 1,200 millions. The Right accepted the Government view, and Deputy Assmann (People's Party) observed, not without irony, that he was "happy to see that the Social Democrats have also been converted to militarism and recognise the need for a powerfully constituted Army." The provisional Reichswehr Law, as drafted by the Government, was passed by the Assembly and promulgated on March 6, 1919, with the signatures of Ebert and Noske. The German Army could now be reconstructed on the basis of voluntary recruitment. It was to be a professional army. Although the official program of the Majority Socialist Party, the so-called Erfurt Program of 1891, provided for a militia army of short-term conscripts, the Socialist Government obtained powers to create a professional army because that was the demand of the General Staff, which preferred professional soldiers to conscripts who might be less reliable from the political point of view. The creation of a professional army was decided on March 6, and the decision was confirmed by the Treaty of Versailles four months later. This comparison of dates is sufficient to prove that the choice was made freely by the Germans themselves and was not imposed by the victors.

The Law of March 6 abolished the separate contingents of Bavaria, Saxony and Wuerttemberg. There was to be only a single national army in Germany. The objects of the Reichswehr were defined as follows :

1. Defence of the frontiers.
2. Execution of the orders of the Government.
3. Maintenance of order within the country.

The Army was based on voluntary enlistment, but the duration of service and the maximum effectives were not fixed, as these matters depended on the stipulations of the Peace Treaty. The officers were to be chosen preferentially from among the old officers who had distinguished them-

selves at the front. Remarkably enough, the officers of the volunteer corps were placed on a par with them and given the same priorities.

After the passing of the Law, the General Staff, whose headquarters had been transferred in February 1919, from Wilhelmshohe to Kolberg (Pomerania), proceeded to amalgamate the volunteer corps and to form them, together with remnants of the old Army, into the new Reichswehr. A careful sorting of the recruits was effected, all Leftist elements being eliminated. For instance, Jews were barred, it being taken for granted that they had radical sympathies. Efforts were made to emphasize the continuity between the Imperial Army and the Reichswehr. The pennons, insignia and archives of the Kaiser's units were handed on to the Reichswehr brigades. On the eve of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany again had an Army of 400 thousand men, imbued with the old spirit and commanded by the Imperial officers. That was the remarkable result of the intimate collaboration between Ebert, Noske and the General Staff.

On March 18, 1919, General Groener was able to write to Noske :

"The High Command has confidence in the Government, limited confidence in the Ministry of War, and unlimited confidence only in the Minister for National Defence."

*Conflict between the Government and Workers of the Left—  
Bloody Repression of Berlin Disorders*

From January onwards the Government was using the regular troops and the volunteer corps everywhere to crush the revolutionary movement, strikes and the agitation of the Workers' Councils. It sent punitive expeditions to Bremen, Hamburg, Halle, Brunswick, Thuringia, Magdeburg and a number of places in Bavaria and the Ruhr. The workers tried to resist the Government's volunteer corps, and their losses numbered hundreds and sometimes thousands. On February 6, 1919, the Hamburg *Echo* wrote :

"The consequences of these days will make themselves severely felt. A few more victories of this kind, and the corps of officers and the reactionary aristocracy and bourgeoisie will have what they want: an instrument fully conscious of its power."

A sad balance sheet for a Socialist Government: the revolutionary *élan* of the working masses broken, German cities bespattered with the blood of the workers, and volunteer corps imbued with the counter-revolutionary spirit multiplying throughout the country.

At the beginning of March, Berlin attempted another rising. On March 3, a General Strike was declared to express the hostility of the workers to the Government. Upon the orders of Noske, General von Luettwitz, commanding the troops in Berlin, set his volunteer corps in motion to smash the strike and suppress the demonstrations. Tanks were used to clear the streets of demonstrators. Working class districts were fired upon with artillery. The workers of Berlin defended themselves as best they could, aided by the civic division of sailors. Noske, exasperated by the workers' resistance, on March 10 issued a monstrous decree, to the effect that "any person caught bearing arms in the struggle against the Government" would be "shot on the spot." The soldiers of the volunteer corps exploited this decree to massacre everyone in whose homes they found arms. Insurgents who were taken prisoner were also massacred. By March 13, the Berlin insurrection had been crushed. On that day Noske was able to make the triumphant announcement in the National Assembly: "The battle raged in all its horror for a week; to-day I am in a position to tell you that the insurrection has been conquered." The civilian victims of that bloody week included twelve thousand killed and more than ten thousand wounded.

#### *Military Suppression of the Socialist Government in Bavaria*

Prussia being now pacified, the Republican Government turned its attention to Bavaria and Saxony. It had a dual aim there: to crush, as in Prussia, the revolutionary impulse, and at the same time impose the will of the Reich on these countries, which were trying to show a certain independence of Berlin.

Bavaria was the only one of the German States where the spirit of November had remained intact. No volunteer corps could be formed in her territory. Power was in the hands of a Socialist Coalition Government, with Kurt

Eisner, an Independent Socialist, as Premier. The Workers' and Soldiers' Councils continued to form the political basis of the Government. The Eisner Government had practically severed relations with Berlin already in November 1918, for it was convinced that the Ebert Government was dominated by counter-revolutionary tendencies. From November till May, Bavaria behaved almost as an independent State. On November 24, 1918, Kurt Eisner had published the secret documents of the Bavarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which clearly revealed Germany's war guilt. This aroused great indignation in the Reich Government, which had already launched the campaign designed to shift the responsibility for the war on other countries.

In this connection, the following passage from a speech delivered by the Independent Socialist, Richard Mueller, on December 16, 1918, before the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, is worth recalling :

"The People's Council (*ie* the 'Greater Berlin Executive Council') has repeatedly demanded that Solf and David, who have tried to prove that Germany was innocent of the world war, must leave the Foreign Office. However, in this connection we always came up against the resistance of the People's Commissars, and so the compromised officials have been able to burn the greater part of the incriminating documentary material. Some of these officials still hold their office and rank. In all these questions we were confronted with difficulties on the part of the People's Commissars "

However, the election of January 13, 1919, to the Bavarian Diet had given a majority to the bourgeois parties. The Eisner Government nevertheless stayed in power. But on February 21, Kurt Eisner was killed by a revolver bullet fired by a young lieutenant, Count Arco-Valley.<sup>1</sup> An eminent Bavarian scholar, the Prelate Kiefel of Regensburg, wrote thus of Eisner's murderer in his book, *Catholicism and modernes Denken* : "Our young national hero, whose selfless idealism alone could kindle new life in our people . . ." At all events, the exploit of this "national hero" had rendered the Bavarian Premiership vacant. The post passed to the Majority Socialist Hoffmann, who

<sup>1</sup> On January 16, 1920, the Munich High Court sentenced Count A. Arco-Valley to death, but the Bavarian Government hastened to issue the following statement

" . . . In view of the grounds of the sentence, which establish that the act sprang from pure patriotism, the Bavarian Ministry as a whole unanimously decided on the 17th to commute the sentence to life imprisonment in a fortress. . . ."

represented a very different tendency from that of Eisner—one of moderation and conciliation towards Berlin. But the workers of Munich were not amenable to this, and on the night of April 6-7, they proclaimed a Soviet Republic. It was acclaimed with cries of "Los vom Reich!" The Red idea was linked with the idea of separatism. South Germany was in revolt against Prussia with its General Staff and volunteer corps. As the revolutionary Government was installing itself in Munich, the Hoffmann Government made an urgent appeal to Noske to send troops to conquer Munich and drive out the revolutionary Government. Noske and the generals agreed with pleasure, because they expected to achieve a dual purpose: that of crushing the last important centre of the Revolution and at the same time suppressing the last vestiges of Bavarian autonomy left to her after 1871. On April 27, the troops began to surround the Bavarian capital. There was a fierce struggle with the Red Army for several days, but on May 2, Munich was conquered, and on May 3, with the support of Prussian bayonets, the Hoffmann Government was restored. The following day there were bloody reprisals. No fewer than seven hundred persons were massacred without trial. Many of them were innocent, as the twenty-nine Catholic workers who were arrested at a peaceful meeting and shot on the spot, though they had taken no part in the struggle.

The Hoffmann Government paid the price of Berlin's aid by decreeing the dissolution of the autonomous Bavarian Army and incorporating it with the Reich Army. Thus Noske succeeded in abolishing the privilege that Bismarck had left to Bavaria—the unity of the German Reich was now still more firmly cemented.

It was now the turn of Saxony, where working class agitation was suppressed by the occupation of Leipzig, on May 10, 1919, by 20,000 soldiers sent by Noske.

By about the middle of May the work of the Socialist Government and the volunteer corps had been completed. The whole of Germany had been pacified. The Revolution was nothing but a memory. The only real force that remained on the battle-field was the new Reichswehr. It was composed of volunteers and was 400,000 men strong.

*Balance Sheet of Majority Socialist Policy*

The balance sheet of the policy of the Majority Socialists was drawn up on June 14, 1919, by Herr Wissell, then Minister of National Economy. This is what he said :

"Despite the Revolution, the nation feels that its hopes have been disappointed. The things which the people expected of the Government have not come to pass . . .

"Essentially, we have governed according to the old forms of our State life. We have only succeeded in breathing very little fresh life into these forms. We have not been able so to influence the Revolution that Germany should be filled with a new spirit. The inner structure of German civilisation, of social life, appears little altered. And even so, not for the better. The nation believes that the achievements of the Revolution are simply negative in character, that in place of one form of military and bureaucratic government by individuals, another has been introduced, and that the principles of government do not differ essentially from those of the old régime. . . .

"I believe that the verdict of history both upon the National Assembly and ourselves will be severe and bitter."

Herr Wissell had in mind the discontent of the working masses, which had manifested itself even in the Resolutions of various Majority Socialist organizations. For instance, the Socialist organization of Muenster demanded the expulsion of Noske, while that of Frankfort wanted the Socialist group in Parliament "to do everything in its power towards the rapid dissolution of the volunteer corps," and that of Hamburg expressed the opinion that the army of volunteers constituted a danger to the achievements of the Revolution. Other Resolutions called for the nationalisation of certain industries, democratisation of the administration, and land reform. But the Majority Socialist leaders rejected all these demands.

The Majority Socialist Party never attempted to nationalise the coal mines, which would have undermined the power of the Ruhr magnates, nor did they seriously touch any other industry. However, Wissell, in his capacity as Minister of National Economy, at least attempted, at the Socialist Congress held in Weimar in June 1919, to win support for a program of planned economy. But moderate as his ideas were, they were received with such hostility that, on July 12, 1919, Wissell resigned. He was replaced by Robert Schmidt, who held extremely moderate views on economic and social questions. With the fall of Wissell

the idea of a planned economy was finally abandoned. The barons of industry had won.

Wissell's resignation was preceded, on April 4, 1919, by the resignation of the Commission appointed to study the problem of nationalisation of certain industries, and headed by Kautsky and Francke. The Commission explained its decision by declaring that it found it impossible to carry on its work for lack of any help from the Government, which even prevented publication of the Commission's reports, *e.g.*, on the coal industry.

The Revolution was buried long before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Thanks to the connivance of the Majority Socialists, the pillars of the old régime—the officers, bureaucrats, industrialists and landowners—had regained the influence that had been temporarily menaced in November 1918, and were now increasingly dominating the destinies of the Republic.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Peace Terms*

No one at the Peace Conference in Paris thought of a complete disarmament of Germany, nor of a total occupation of her territory, much less of effective control of her heavy industries and her imports of the raw materials that were essential for rearmament. On March 7, 1919, that is to say, the day after the promulgation of the provisional Reichswehr Law, the Conference adopted the principle of a professional army for Germany. By a strange coincidence, the decision of the Conference constituted

<sup>1</sup> The political history of the German Socialists during the period 1914-1920 was summarized by a German writer as follows.

"Inwardly, the German working class has shared the hopes with which Imperialist Germany went to war. It sanctioned the war loans and also voluntarily submitted to the political co-ordination of the *Burgfrieden* (political truce). Owing to the 'education' it had enjoyed in the Hohenzollern State, as well as through its own attitude, it had lost that revolutionary force that would have been necessary for it to make a radical break with the past. What seemed to Social Democracy to be the most desirable aim was not the creation of a Socialist society, but 'a restoration of normal conditions,' that is, pre-war conditions. . . . It respectfully waived the purging of the judicial system and the Civil Service of monarchist-nationalist elements. It neglected to organise a new Republican-Socialist Army. It permitted the old oligarchy of generals, landowners and big industrialists to maintain itself behind the facade of a Labour Government that was in fact impotent, waiting for the time when, with the aid of the Reichswehr, which constituted a State within the State, and with the aid of illegal reactionary associations, they could regain their former position of power." (V. Gittermann, *Die historische Tragik der Sozialistischen Idee*, pp. 289-292, Zuerich, 1939.)

confirmation of the German Law, adopted by the National Assembly on the advice of the experts of the General Staff. The victors were in agreement with the vanquished, the former hoping to prevent a German war of revenge by the imposition of a military principle which the latter had adopted by their own accord, in the conviction that it would serve to restore Germany's military power. However, whereas Noske proposed to create a mercenary army of 500,000 men and had already succeeded in enlisting 400,000, the Conference imposed a maximum figure of 100,000.

On May 7, the peace terms were handed to the German Delegation, then headed by the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau. The handing over of the peace terms took place at the first joint meeting between the representatives of the victorious Powers and those of Germany. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau seized the occasion to make a vehement speech against the Allied terms. He spoke seated, contrary to diplomatic usage. "What gave us much offence at the content and manner of the speech was the fact that in delivering it, the Minister, on this very formal occasion, remained seated. I have seen it suggested in charity that probably some infirmity accounted for this apparent discourtesy, but that it was deliberate is attested by a strongly anti-Ally German writer. He reports that as the German delegates were on their way to the ceremony, Brockdorff-Rantzau asked one of his colleagues: 'Would you stand or remain seated?' (Nowak: *Versailles*—Verlag fuer Politik, Berlin, 1927, p. 258.) Lloyd George asked Clemenceau why the French and Italians were not so angry as the British over such studied bad manners. 'Because,' was the reply, 'we are accustomed to their insolence. We have had to bear it for fifty years. It is new to you.'" (Lord Riddell: *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference*, Gollancz, 1933, p. 76.) Lord Riddell, who was present, gives a vivid little picture:

"The Count's manner and the tone of his speech seriously annoyed the Allied delegates. Clemenceau impatiently tapped the table with an ivory paper-knife. President Wilson impatiently toyed with a pencil. Lloyd George pressed his paper-knife on the table with such vigour that it broke. . . . President Wilson said to me as we walked out of the Conference: 'The Germans are really a stupid people. They always do the wrong thing. They always did the wrong thing during the war.



They don't understand human nature This is the most tactless speech I have ever heard. It will set the whole world against them.' " (*The Treaty of Versailles and After*, by Lord Riddell and Others, Allen and Unwin, 1935, p. 20.)

With this picture may be contrasted the description given by a distinguished German historian who was not present :

" By his calm and distinguished behaviour he succeeded in impressing even his opponents, and in preserving even in that difficult situation the dignity of Germany." (Professor Erich Brandenburg, *Propyläen-Weltgeschichte*, Vol. X, 1933, p. 464 )<sup>1</sup>

The peace terms included, among others, the military, naval and air clauses relating to the limitation of German armaments. The German Army, consisting of a maximum of 100,000 men, was to be based on the principle of voluntary service. Non-commissioned officers and men were to engage themselves for twelve consecutive years, officers for twenty-five years. Conscription was to be abolished. The General Staff was to be dissolved and not to be re-constituted. The amounts of the different categories of war material were to be fixed at certain maxima. Military aviation was to be completely abolished. The Navy was to be very considerably reduced, surplus warships being handed over to the Allies. The fortresses in the West were to be dismantled, those in the East might be maintained—a differentiation that may have been due to the Allies' fear of the Russian Revolution. It is interesting to note, further, that the peace terms did not demand the withdrawal of the German troops which in 1919 were still in the Baltic countries and fighting against the Russians. Withdrawal of these troops was made conditional upon the Allied Powers making an express demand. It was provided that an inter-Allied Commission shall be established in Berlin to supervise the execution of the military clauses. Finally, the Rhineland was to be occupied for fifteen years by way of guarantee, while a zone extending along the entire left bank of the Rhine and comprising a strip of territory fifty kilometres wide on the right bank, was to be completely and permanently demilitarised.

The territorial clauses detached from Germany part of the conquests made by her in the course of the 150 years

<sup>1</sup> T. E. Jossop, *The Treaty of Versailles—Was it Just?* Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1942, pp. 54-56.

prior to the world war. Alsace, conquered from France in 1871, was to be returned to her; Northern Schleswig, that is, a third of the German conquests in the war of 1864 against Denmark, was to be returned to Denmark; and finally, the Western provinces of Poland taken from her in 1772, 1793 and 1795, were to be returned to Poland, with certain important exceptions, which were to remain in German hands. The conquests made during the world war and confirmed by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, were also to be abandoned, the Treaty itself being considered as having been abrogated.

In connection with the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France under the Peace Treaty, it is interesting to note that the local Diet of that country, which was elected under the German régime, had on December 4, 1918, sent the following telegram to the President of the French Republic:

"The Diet of Alsace-Lorraine, elected on the basis of universal suffrage, has learned with great satisfaction that the President of the Republic will honour with his visit the provinces regained for France by the bravery of the French and Allied troops. . .

"The Diet joins in advance in the homage that will be paid by the country to the Fatherland with which it is now reunited."

This telegram constitutes a striking refutation of the statements, repeated during the war by all the German political parties, from the Right to the Socialist Left, to the effect that Alsace-Lorraine wanted to remain attached to the Reich.

### *Confusion in Germany — Erzberger's Moderating Influence*

Germany was crushed. The ruling class, which considered every conquest of the Reich as something sacrosanct, and which as late as a year earlier had still been dreaming of the acquisition of new territories, could not reconcile themselves to the idea of surrendering the spoils of aggressions committed by Germany at various periods. They could also not resign themselves to a reduction of the new and so ingeniously reconstituted Army to 100,000 men. In brief, defeated Germany did not want to be treated as such, and her indignation knew no bounds.

The political leaders and the generals were now confronted with this dilemma: to sign or to resume hostilities?

The Independents were in favour of signing. Scheidemann, the Chancellor, declared on behalf of the Majority Socialists that the Allied terms were unacceptable. The Democrats were of the same opinion. The Centre was divided, because its leader, Erzberger, was in favour of signing. The parties of the Right were naturally fulminating against the Treaty. One of the fiercest opponents of signature was Walter Rathenau.

On May, President Ebert and the Scheidemann Government issued a Proclamation to the German people stating that the Allied terms were intolerable and unrealisable. The Government called upon all the German States to organize demonstrations of protest. The Socialist Press vied with the newspapers of the Right in vituperating against the Allied terms. Public demonstrations succeeded each other without cessation; Ebert and Scheidemann stoked the exaltation with impassioned speeches.

On May 12, Chancellor Scheidemann opened the debate in the National Assembly, which was this time meeting in Berlin, by declaring that "The terms of the Treaty are unacceptable to Germany." "What hand," he cried, "would not wither if it offered itself, and us with it, to be shackled with such chains?" Nearly all the speakers supported the Chancellor, outbidding each other in nationalist sentiment. Hermann Mueller (Socialist), declared that the Allied terms constituted an attack against Socialism in Germany. Adolf Groeber (Centre), talked of the enslavement of 70 million Germans. Conrad Haussmann (Democrat), spoke of the violation of the principles of democracy by the Allies; the German National speaker, of French revenge and British brutality; Gustav Stresemann (People's Party), of the political and economic destruction of a dishonoured Germany. The tone of all the speakers, whatever their arguments, was the same: one of nationalist rage. They all seemed to forget their own attitude of little more than a year earlier, when they acclaimed the inexorable terms of the peace treaties imposed by Germany on Russia and Rumania. However, Hugo Haase (Independent Socialist), had the courage to recall, in that agitated atmosphere, that his party alone would have the right to protest against the Allied terms, because it was the only party that had protested against the

Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest; but he spoke for acceptance of the terms proposed by the Allies. The debate closed with a speech by the Speaker of the Assembly, Herr Fehrenbach (Centre), who as a Catholic expressed his astonishment that "not a single bishop or priest abroad has condemned the Allied terms as anti-Christian." He concluded with the threat that the new German generation would break the chains of servitude imposed by the Allies. This threat of Fehrenbach's was made before an exalted Assembly, which stood up and sang the Imperial Anthem, "Deutschland ueber Alles" !

The Independent Socialists were not far wrong when they said that they saw in the atmosphere of the Assembly a re-birth of the spirit of 1914—national unity inspired by fierce nationalism.

The Assembly approved, almost unanimously, the negative attitude of the Government.

Encouraged by this vote of confidence, the Government decided to submit counter-proposals to the Allies, and if these were rejected, to refuse to sign the Treaty. These counter-proposals were conveyed to the Allies on May 29, 1919.

At the same time, the Germans wanted to create *faits accomplis* on the Eastern frontier. The Government instructed Winnig, Majority Socialist Commissar for East and West Prussia, and Hoersing, Majority Socialist Commissar for Silesia, to organize an armed struggle against the Poles of these provinces, with a view to ensuring their retention by the Reich. Colonel Reinhardt, Prussian War Minister, was ordered to place troops at the disposal of the two Socialist Commissars. Officially, the Government wanted to have no connection with this "popular" movement, which would have appeared to have been initiated by the two Commissars, so that they alone would have been responsible in the eyes of foreign countries.

The only German politician who saw the folly of such plans was the leader of the Centre—Erzberger. He was no less nationalistic than the others. During the first part of the war he maintained the attitude of a convinced militarist. It was he who, on September 17, 1914, wrote to General von Falkenhayn: "We need not bother about infringing international law or violating the laws of

humanity." It was he who, in an article published in *Der Tag* on October 21, 1914, wrote: "If a means could be found to wipe out the whole of London, there would be more humanity in making use of it than in allowing the blood of a single Prussian soldier to be shed on the battlefield." And it was he, again, who exulted over the invention of the flame-thrower as "the crowning achievement of German technical genius." However, this fierce nationalist was also an opportunist. As soon as, in 1917, he saw that victory was no longer possible, he changed his mind and advocated a compromise peace. Now he was prepared to sign the Treaty because he realized that armed resistance was impossible. He was afraid that if hostilities were resumed, not only would the Treaty be incomparably harsher, but the unity of the Reich would also be endangered. He was prepared to agree to the sacrifices demanded because he wanted to save the work of Bismarck. Though he was bitterly opposed by the parties of the Right, the latter understood what his principal anxiety was, and at bottom they were glad to see him shouldering the responsibility and thereby averting the greater danger, that of the disintegration of Germany. As the notorious Pan-German Naumann, a member of the Democratic Party, said with cynical sincerity: "To-day we need you, but to-morrow we shall throw you out."

On June 3, Erzberger sent to the members of the Government and the President of the Republic a memorandum explaining his point of view, and stating that refusal to sign the Treaty would entail resumption of hostilities, which in turn would entail:

1. The ruin of the Reich, its disintegration into separate States. Hatred of the individual States against Prussia, which would be held responsible for this catastrophe to Germany, would make the break final.

2. After a short interval Germany would be compelled to make peace just the same. But the peace would be concluded by the individual States and not by the Reich, and one condition that would be imposed on the individual States would be that they should not re-unite into a single whole. Such a peace would be even worse than the present one.

3. The Government would be overthrown. The Independents and Communists would seize power. The Reichswehr would be dissolved. There would be chaos all over Germany.

The Government deliberated on this on June 3 and 4

1919. Erzberger added a further argument, saying as Germany was defeated, and as, therefore, the Treaty was being imposed by force of arms, Germany would not have to implement it. Once the Allies had been appeased by the signing of the Treaty, they would make concessions, and the Treaty would gradually lose its substance. Prophetic words indeed, though somewhat strange, coming from the mouth of the leader of a Catholic Party.

*Allied Reply to German Counter - Proposals — Germany Divided on Question of Signing Treaty—German Fleet Scuttled—National Assembly Decides on Conditional Signature*

Though on June 4 only two out of the fourteen members of the Government supported Erzberger's thesis, the latter's reasoning was beginning to shake the Government parties. On June 16, his argument was reinforced by the Allies' refusal of nearly all the German counter-proposals, and an ultimatum giving Germany seven days to choose between signature of the Treaty and immediate resumption of hostilities.

The only important concession contained in the reply of June 16 to the German counter-proposals, was made by the Allies at the expense of Poland. The fate of Upper Silesia, which according to the peace terms of May 7, 1919, was to be transferred to Poland, was under the terms of June 16 to be decided upon by a plebiscite. On receipt of the Allied reply, the German Peace Delegation sent a memorandum to the Reich Government advising it not to sign the Treaty.

For the first time, the generals were just as divided as the politicians. While part of them, with Colonel Reinhardt, the Prussian War Minister, were in favour of armed resistance against the Allies, another part, with General Groener, the Quartermaster-General, were in favour of signing the Treaty. The reasons for Groener's conciliatory attitude were the same as those of Erzberger. Like Ludendorff in September 1918, so Groener in June 1919, saw no possibility of armed resistance. He preferred even a harsh peace to a complete catastrophe for the Reich. On June 16, having studied the military situation, and having clearly

realised that resumption of hostilities would quickly end in a *débâcle* and total occupation of Germany, he presented his report to Marshal Hindenburg, telling him roundly that rejection of the Allied ultimatum would entail the disappearance of Germany from the map. Hindenburg, after long reflection, replied in a manner that does little credit to his civic courage. He expressed agreement with Groener on the essence of the question, but would not compromise himself by openly advising the Government to sign the Treaty. He gave his advice in a camouflaged form, without directly assuming any responsibility. Here is the text of Hindenburg's letter to the Government, which he sent through Groener :

" General Headquarters,  
June 17, 1919.

" In case hostilities are resumed, we are from the military point of view in a position, in the East, to reconquer the province of Posen and to hold our frontiers. In the West, we could not count on victory in case of a serious attack by our enemies, owing to the numerical superiority of the Entente, and the possibility of envelopment on both wings.

" Thus a favourable issue of the operation as a whole is highly problematical, but as a soldier I must prefer a glorious defeat to a shameful peace. Von Hindenburg."

Armed with this letter, Groener travelled to Weimar the same day. The following day he had an interview with Colonel Rheinhardt, but they both adhered to their opposing points of view. Rheinhardt was for a fight to the death, Groener for the signing of the Treaty. On the other hand, a few hours later Noske rallied to Groener's view. On the night of June 18-19, the Cabinet met to consider Hindenburg's letter and a detailed memorandum of Groener's. The result was nil—for six Ministers voted for signature and eight against.

In this confused situation a grand council of generals was convoked in Weimar, where they met on June 19. The Republic had placed its destiny into their hands. It was for them, the guardians of the national traditions, to say the last word. However, the generals were also divided among themselves; some followed Groener, while others agreed with Rheinhardt. Such a result could not but add to the indecision of the Government.

On the same day the Government received the views of

the German State Governments. With the exception of Prussia and the Hanseatic towns (Bremen, Hamburg and Luebeck), nearly all were in favour of signature. On June 19, there was also a meeting between the parliamentary parties of the Government coalition. Among the Socialists seventy-five Deputies voted for the signing of the Treaty, thirty-five against; among the Democrats, fifty-five against, none for; among the Catholic Centre, the majority for, but sixteen against. This seemed to be a complete deadlock.

Scheidemann now decided to resign, and Germany found herself without a Government. His example was followed by Brockdorff-Rantzau, who resigned not only as Minister, but also as head of the German Delegation at the Peace Conference.

Ebert appointed the Socialist, Bauer, as the new Chancellor. Bauer formed a Cabinet without the Democrats, who were still fiercely opposed to the signature of the Treaty—it was a red-and-black Cabinet composed of seven Majority Socialists and four members of the Centre. Noske kept his post as Reichswehr Minister, Hermann Mueller (Majority Socialist) replaced Brockdorff-Rantzau as Foreign Minister, while Erzberger took the portfolio of Finance and also assumed the functions of Vice-Chancellor.

The day before, on June 21, the German Admiral von Reuter, commanding the German Fleet, which had been interned at Scapa Flow since November 21, 1918, took the daring step of scuttling his ships and thereby depriving the Allies of their booty. Abusing the confidence which the British Admiral Freemantle had placed in him, and taking advantage of the temporary absence of the British squadron at gunnery practice at sea, the German Admiral gave orders for the ships to be scuttled. Battleships, cruisers and destroyers—seventy ships in all—sank one after the other. The German Fleet had escaped from the Allies.

On June 22, the new Government decided to inform the Entente that it was prepared to sign the Treaty on condition that the clauses relating to war guilt and the punishment of war criminals (arts. 227-231) were suppressed. This was a singular stipulation, because it meant that the Republican Government was protesting right to the end



against clauses directed against the old régime alone. The Republic would not admit the guilt of the Imperial régime in unleashing the war, nor would it agree to the trial of the agents of that régime who had been guilty of war atrocities. This manifestation of solidarity with the old régime was overlooked abroad.

The same day the Chancellor placed before the Assembly a Resolution in the following terms: "The Government of the German Republic is ready to sign the Peace Treaty, without thereby acknowledging that the German people are the responsible authors of the World War, and without accepting articles 227-231."

In the course of the ensuing debate, Deputy Hoersing, speaking on behalf of the Socialists who came from regions which were to be detached from the Reich under the Treaty, made the following statement:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, In the name of the Social Democratic representatives of the German territories that are faced through the Peace Treaty under consideration with the immediate danger of being detached from Germany, I have to make the following statement. Filled with the profoundest pain, we raise our voice to give expression to our passionate protest against the separation of our homeland from the Motherland. . . . However, in order not to make our homeland the scene of fresh bloody conflicts . . . we have nevertheless decided, with bleeding hearts, to agree to the peace Resolution of our group.

"However, in this solemn hour we declare before the whole world and before history that we and the men and women whose confidence has delegated us to the German Constituent National Assembly, are German and wish to remain German. We shall also not abandon the hope as long as we live that sooner or later the territories detached from their homeland by the decree of a short-sighted and hate-imbued victor, will be returned to the Fatherland

"This statement was signed by Deputies Josef Luebbring, Willy Steinkopf, Peter Kronen, Heinrich Schulz, and Wilhelm Koehler of East Prussia, Dr Boerschmann and Bartenstein, of Memel; Julius Gehl, Walter Reck, of Danzig—West Prussia; Hermann Schulz and Anna Simon of West Prussia; Wilhelm Schulz and Gertrud Lodahl of Posen; Roman Becker, Friede Hanke, Anton Bias and Otto Hoersing, of Upper Silesia; Franz Pokorny for the Saar territory, expelled therefrom; Paul Michelsen, Luise Schroeder, Karl Frohme, Heinrich Kuerbis, of Schleswig" (Cries from the Right: "We shall make a note of them!")

These Socialist Deputies had probably failed to ask themselves how Germany had come into possession of the regions in question and what nationality constituted the majority of the population. To take only two examples,

the province of Posen was acquired by Prussia in 1793, at the second partition of Poland, and had never ceased to be overwhelmingly Polish, while Northern Schleswig, acquired in 1864 from Denmark, continued to have a Danish majority. But—"Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles!"

A very different ideology was expressed by Haase who, at the same sitting, had the courage to tell his compatriots some home truths:

"... The untrue talk that our Army was not defeated and that we have been placed at the mercy of our enemies by the Revolution, only serves to screen the guilty. Since July, 1918, military resistance was broken and defeat followed defeat. But for the fact that an armistice was brought about by the wish and will of the Army Command, the German Army would have suffered a débâcle in the field of a magnitude unknown in the history of the world. . . . In our conviction it was the imperialism of all capitalist countries that had provoked the antagonism that led to an armaments race and finally to war. All Governments had been accumulating gunpowder, but it was the Habsburg Government that, with the approval of the German Government, set a match to the powder barrel, thereby starting the world conflagration . . . . Since the Bethmann-Hollweg Government, on its own admission, knew that the Serbian war might lead to a world war, yet in spite of this backed the Austrian Government and approved its action, it charged itself with guilt in an incontrovertible manner. . . . We have been demanding from the outset that our Government should publish the documents relating to the outbreak of war and should call the guilty to account. . . . Now that which we expected has happened. Since Germany herself had failed to pass judgment, the Entente demands that the matter should be dealt with by a court in which we shall have no part."

The Resolution moved by the Chancellor was passed by 237 votes against 138.

The Centre, the Majority Socialists and the Independent Socialists, voted for the conditional acceptance of the Treaty; the other parties, including the Democrats, voted for rejection. The Deputies who voted even against the conditional signature of the Treaty, included the following: Dr Schueking, later a judge at the Hague International Court, and Dr G. Stresemann, later winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Stresemann's attitude was consistent, as in 1918 he had opposed to the last moment the suggestion of the General Staff to ask for an armistice. It was in October 1918, that he had for the first time since the war dissociated himself from the policy of the General Staff.

Outside the National Assembly, part of the Centre was hostile to the signing of the Treaty and to Erzberger's policy. They included H. Bruening, who was soon to become the right-hand man of A. Stegerwald, leader of the Catholic trade unions, and, in 1924, a Reichstag Deputy.

*Allies Demand Unconditional Surrender—Groener Advises Compliance—National Assembly Authorizes Government to Sign Unconditionally—"In Germany everything Begins and Ends with . . . the Army"—Hindenburg Resigns*

However, the Allies rejected all conditions, informing the Reich that the Treaty must be accepted as it stood not later than by June 23. This threat only increased the confusion in Germany. The generals who were against signature offered Noske dictatorship on condition that he placed himself at the head of armed resistance. The politicians changed their minds from one minute to another. The Government itself did not know what to do.

It was then that Ebert intervened. As always in grave moments, he rang up General Headquarters, asking to speak to Hindenburg. The latter avoided a conversation. He would not advise anything, because he would not assume any responsibility. It was Groener who, with his usual courage, answered, giving the following advice :

"Not as Quartermaster-General, Herr Reich President, but as a German with a clear view of the situation as a whole, I feel it incumbent on me at this hour to give you the following advice :

"Resumption of the struggle is ultimately hopeless, apart from temporary successes in the East. Peace must therefore be concluded on the terms set by the enemy."

This opinion settled the matter, just as Ludendorff's had led to the request for an armistice. The Government pulled itself together. Ebert asked the Opposition whether they were prepared to form a new Government, refuse to sign the Treaty and resume hostilities. The Right had not the least desire to do so, and hastened to acknowledge the patriotic motives of the partisans of signature.

The National Assembly met at 3 o'clock in a panicky atmosphere. Several Deputies fled from the hall, fearing a bombardment of Weimar on the expiration of the ultimatum, that is, at 7 o'clock that evening.

Chancellor Bauer made the following statement :

" Let us sign ! That is the proposal that I have to make to you on behalf of the entire Cabinet. To sign unconditionally. There is no extenuation. The reasons that compel us to make this proposal are the same as yesterday. Only now we are separated by barely four hours from the resumption of hostilities. We cannot take the responsibility for a fresh war, even if we had the weapons. We are defenceless "

No one dared to table a motion forbidding the Government to sign the Treaty.

On the suggestion of a Deputy, the Assembly agreed to interpret the Resolution of the previous day in the sense that it authorized the Government to sign the Treaty even without any reservations. At the request of the Centre, representatives of the Opposition made statements to the effect that the Opposition assured the Government parties that it did not doubt the patriotism of those who had voted for the signing of the Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

The sitting closed with an appeal to the Army, made by Speaker Fehrenbach on behalf of the whole Assembly. Herr Fehrenbach interpreted the sentiments of his colleagues as follows :

" Ladies and Gentlemen, The Party leaders have agreed on the following text of the Proclamation to the German Army : ' In the hour of deepest national misfortune the National Assembly thanks the German Defence Forces for the sacrificial defence of the homeland. (Bravo !) The peace imposed upon us despite the heroism of our troops makes enormous and oppressive demands on all parts of the nation, but particularly heavy ones on the sense of honour of our soldiers. The German people is confident that the Army and Navy, officers, non-commissioned officers and men, will in loyalty to their great past set an example of self-denial and self-sacrifice at this most difficult time (Bravo !) and will work hand in hand with the rest of the people on the restoration of our Fatherland. We shall succeed if all will perform their patriotic duty.' (Applause) As there is no objection, I find that the House is agreed upon this Proclamation to the German Army." (Lively Applause.)

It is said that in France everything ends with a song. It might be said that in Germany everything begins and ends . . . with the Army.

<sup>1</sup> The statements to the effect that " Ayes " were no less patriotic than the " Noes," were made by Schultz-Bromberg on behalf of the German Nationals, by Dr Heintze on behalf of the Populists and by Dr Schiffer on behalf of the Democrats. Speaker Fehrenbach summed up the meaning of these statements thus : " All parts of the House, both Ayes and Noes, were only guided in their voting by patriotic motives and inspired by high conscientiousness and the most serious appreciation of our Fatherland's position."

Fortified by Groener's opinion and the assent of the National Assembly, Ebert at 4 p.m. authorized the Government to accept the Treaty. Germany made her decision three hours before the expiration of the ultimatum. The three million Allied soldiers stationed along the Rhine, ready to occupy Germany, grounded arms. The unity of the Reich was saved.

After the event, the generals rallied to the Government's decision. At a meeting held on June 24 at Noske's house in Berlin, they promised to stay at their posts and continue to collaborate with the Government.

On June 25, Hindenburg tendered his resignation to the Government, thus anticipating the execution of the Peace Treaty, under which the General Staff was to be abolished. In his letter of resignation he wrote, among others :

"The possibility of safeguarding our internal peace and of reverting to a period of fruitful work, essentially depends on the solidity of our Army. Therefore, the maintenance of this solidity must be our first duty."

President Ebert paid a tribute to Hindenburg in a letter which is worth quoting :

"Herr Generalfeldmarschall,

"I have taken note of your decision to resign from your post at the head of the Supreme Command after the signing of the preliminary peace, in order to retire into private life. In signifying my agreement, I take the opportunity to express to you the undying gratitude of the German people for the services you have rendered to the Fatherland, with great self-sacrifice, during the war and at the present time. The German people will never forget that you have loyally remained at your post in times of dire need also, and have placed your personality at the Fatherland's disposal. Ebert."

On June 28, the Peace Treaty was signed at Versailles.<sup>1</sup>

On June 30, the General Staff was dissolved.

General Groener, who thereby lost his post as Quartermaster-General, was appointed Commandant of the military area of Kolberg, where General Headquarters had been

<sup>1</sup> The Treaty was signed on behalf of Germany by Bell (Centre) and Mueller Franken (Majority Socialist). It will be recalled that Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, when making his speech against the Allied terms on May 7, 1919, remained seated. This provocative attitude will be easier to understand in the light of Scheidemann's following remark with reference to his comrade, Mueller Franken : "Will he sign or will he throw the inkpot into the faces of those hateful fellows?" (Philip Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, London, 1929, Vol. II., p. 639.) "Those hateful fellows" were, of course, the representatives of the Allied Powers.

recently established. He finally left the Army in September of the same year. It might have been thought that the Reich's back was now broken—no General Staff and no Military Academy, which had been the nursery of so many generations of officers.

However, the Republic immediately set to work on military reconstruction. On July 5, the Government appointed a commission composed of eight soldiers, and headed by General von Seeckt, during the war Chief of Staff to Marshal von Mackensen, to attend to the organization of the new Army. In reality, this commission was the embryo of a new General Staff.

*The Republican Constitution—National Assembly  
Demands Incorporation of Austria*

On July 31, the National Assembly adopted the Republican Constitution. If events were determined by legal texts, it might have been said that that day marked the foundation of democracy in Germany. That, indeed, was the general impression abroad, where the Weimar Constitution was greeted as evidence of the triumph of Democracy. However, the political forces concerned decided otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

The Constitution established a parliamentary régime. Though the President, who was to be elected by popular vote, enjoyed very extensive powers, the Government could be overthrown by a vote of the Reichstag. However,

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it will be of interest to recall the view expressed in a memorandum dated January 10, 1919, by Marshal Foch

"The crisis may break again. The change in form of the German Government will undoubtedly not be sufficient to prevent it. A Republic based on the same principle of centralisation and militarism as the old Empire will still present great dangers and will still be a redoubtable menace to peace. Such a Republic is easy to achieve, it seems to me, in a country imbued with the Prussian spirit, Prussian methods and military doctrines, where the principle of authority still rules undisputed, because of the temperament and tradition of the people. More than that, Republican Germany, freed once and for all from the fetters placed on the Empire by the existence of the little principalities, might increase in strength. . . Institutions republican in appearance might evolve endowed with all the strength of an absolutist Government. We shall not witness such an evolution before some time elapses, no doubt much time. But what then? . . ."

Clemenceau had the same anxieties. "I was forced to realise that the German Revolution was mere window dressing and that, with the aggressor of 1914 not a whit cured of his insane folly, we should continue without respite to be subjected, in a new setting, to the same attack from the same enemy." (*Grandeur and Misery of Victory*, p. 106.)

the Constitution included an Article 48, which reads thus :

"Should a State fail to fulfil the obligations incumbent upon it under the Reich Constitution or under Reich Law, the Reich President shall be entitled to compel it to do so by force of arms

"Should the security or public order of the Reich be gravely disturbed or endangered, the Reich President shall be entitled to take the necessary measures for the restoration of order and if necessary intervene by the use of armed force " <sup>1</sup>

The first paragraph gave the Reich President the right to suppress by force any impulse on the part of the German States to achieve autonomy ; while the second paragraph conferred upon him such extensive and ill-defined powers that he could use them to set aside the parliamentary régime and establish a dictatorship based on armed force. When Hindenburg became President, he took the first suitable opportunity to make use of Art. 48. It was in operation from 1930 onwards, serving as the basis of a Presidential dictatorship under the successive Chancellors of Brüning, von Papen and von Schleicher.

The National Assembly made it clear that the new Republic enjoyed a good appetite by inserting Art. 61 in the Constitution, according to which : "German Austria is entitled to become a member of the German Federal Council after its Anschluss. Until then the representation of German Austria will have an advisory vote." This Article, which was rendered void by the clause of the Treaty of Versailles forbidding the Anschluss, remained a dead letter until March, 1938, when Hitler and his army undertook to carry out the political testament of the Assembly of Weimar.

The political meaning attached to Art. 61 of the Constitution by the Government is explained in the following statement, made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, in the National Assembly on February 14, 1919 : "The German people is a living unity beyond any political frontiers, even beyond the frontiers of the old Reich, and the united Reich is its natural form

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the Emperor did not possess powers like those conferred on the President of the Republic by Art. 48. The Prussian Army could not intervene in the affairs of the German States, unless expressly invited to do so by the Government of the State concerned, and the assent of the Federal Council was also required. Art. 48 abolished all these guarantees of autonomy.

of existence . . .”<sup>1</sup> The idea of unifying all individuals of German origin in a single Reich is in the tradition of the Pan-German movement. The Minister of the Republic adopted it and gave it a distinctly annexationist sense by adding, in the same speech: “The new Czechoslovak State is violating the law to which it owes its own creation, because it is not only trying to impose its sovereignty on the Germans of Bohemia and Moravia by force of arms but is also claiming territory inhabited by Germans in the South-East! . . .”<sup>2</sup> As in the case of Austria, so also in that of the Sudetenland, it was the Third Reich that undertook to realise the dreams of the Republic.

Despite the republican form of the State, the Constitution retained the term “German Empire” (Deutsches Reich). Professor Preuss (Democrat), who drafted the Constitution, explained this—on February 24, 1919—as follows: “It has also been desired that instead of the designation ‘Reich’ the term ‘German Republic’ should be used. The draft is by no means averse to acknowledging the Republic, but the word and concept of Empire possess such a deep rooted emotional value for the German people that this name cannot be given up.”

*The Baltic Adventure—Connivance of Republican Government and Military Authorities—German Troops Against Baltic Governments and the Russian Revolution—Allied Veto—End of the Escapade*

After the signing of the Armistice there was still a huge German army in occupation of Poland, the Baltic countries and the vast areas ceded by Russia under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The German troops immediately began to fall back on Germany, but with this important exception: the units that were in the Baltic countries remained there, maintaining direct communication with the Reich through East Prussia. The nucleus of the German troops in the Baltic countries was in Latvia, where a Latvian national Government had just been formed by Ulmanis. The latter, scared by the Russian Revolution, and acting on the advice of the inter-Allied military mission, in December, 1918,

<sup>1</sup> Brockdorff-Rantzau, *Dokumente*, Charlottenburg, 1920, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit*, p. 50.



concluded a formal pact with Winnig, the Socialist Reich Commissar for East Prussia. Under this pact the German troops were to remain in Latvia in order to fight the Soviet Army and protect the new Latvian Republic. Ulmanis meant the pact to be of a provisional character, for he was equally anxious to avoid a Soviet occupation and to get rid, in due course, both of the German troops and their protégés, the Baltic barons, that is, the landowners of German origin who had been established in the Baltic countries for centuries. Winnig was no more sincere than Ulmanis. He made the agreement with Ulmanis with the authority of the German Government and the Army, because both the Government and the General Staff were hoping that occupation might change into annexation pure and simple. This was not a new attitude. Already at the beginning of 1918, the same parties (Centre, Socialists, and Progressives) that had rallied to the idea of peace without annexations and indemnities in the West, where victory no longer seemed possible, had refused to take a stand against the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; the Government was inspired by the same idea after the Armistice. They were speculating on the suspicions aroused among the Allies by the Russian Revolution to save as much as possible of the conquests of Brest-Litovsk, and deluding themselves that the Allies would shut their eyes and let Germany take the Baltic Provinces in order to dam the advance of the Red troops. That was the ultimate reason why the German Government left the German troops in the Balticum, supplying them regularly, and reinforcing them with volunteers from Germany. On February 1, 1919, General Ruediger von der Goltz took command of the Baltic troops. He worked out a program providing for a regular campaign against the Soviet troops, annexation of the Baltic countries for German colonisation, and restoration of the Russian Monarchy after the occupation of St Petersburg. It was a very ambitious plan, for it comprised not only annexations for Germany's benefit, but also the crushing of the Russian Revolution. The German Government, though headed by Socialists, gladly agreed. A recruiting centre was opened in Berlin (*Anwerbestelle Baltenland*).

On January 28, 1919, the Central Committee of the

Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and the Reich military authorities had published the following Proclamation :

"The Central Council of the German Socialist Republic and the Supreme Commanders of the Government Troops issue the following Proclamation :

"The fearful danger threatening our homeland from the east is daily increasing, Russians, Poles, and Czechs are reaching out for German possessions. The Armies of the Bolsheviks already stand before the gates of East Prussia and the Poles far in old German territory. The Bolshevik movement is also making progress within our body politic . . .

"This call is addressed in the first place to you alone, who have for four years heroically protected the German homeland. Help again now to avert the direct misery. Report to the volunteer units established by the Government to defend the frontiers and maintain security and order at home. Come to Berlin to Guards, Cavalry, and Infantry Divisions (Recruiting office, Deutsches Kuenstlertheater, Nueremberg Str. 70), to the Reinhardt Regiment (Moabit, New Criminal Court), to the National Corps of Chasseurs (Albrechtstrasse 131), to the National Infantry Corps (Berlin, Joachimsthaler Str. 38), to the Huelsen Free Corps (Charlottenburg, Rankestr. 34). Report to the volunteer corps established in the provinces by the Chief Commandos and to the District Commandos. . . (Sd.) Cohen (Sd.) Noske."

The Socialist Government of Prussia, on its part, invited young men "to seek their fortunes in Latvia and enter into an engagement that will, later on, ensure the possession of land for them" (in the Baltic Provinces, naturally). Thanks to the reinforcements from Germany, von der Goltz soon had a regular force of 25,000 men. He launched an offensive against the Red troops on March 3, 1919. After his first success he decided to get rid of his Latvian allies, who annoyed him by their hostility to the Baltic barons. On April 16 he had all the officers of the General Staff of the new Latvian Army, as well as all the members of the Latvian Government, arrested. The Latvian Premier, Ulmanis, was obliged to seek refuge on board an Allied ship and place himself under the protection of the inter-Allied mission. Von der Goltz appointed a new Latvian Government, composed entirely of men devoted to Germany and headed by an unknown pastor named Needra. On May 29 the German troops took the offensive against the Soviet troops, entering Riga, where they immediately introduced a reign of terror. Anyone possessing arms, sheltering or failing to denounce Leftist agitators, or seen in the street between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., was liable to the death penalty.

After the signing of the Peace Treaty, the inter-Allied mission, who had no great confidence in General von der Goltz, decided to act. It dismissed Pastor Needra and restored power to Ulmanis, who, after a few days, established himself in Riga. Meanwhile, the German troops were engaged in a fierce struggle both with the Soviet troops and the new Estonian national army. Having suffered some reverses, General von der Goltz was not in a position to oppose the return of Ulmanis, and he made a truce with the Estonian and Latvian troops and even evacuated Riga.

In the end the Allies decided to stop the crazy game the German troops, with the support of the Reich Government, were playing. On August 5, Marshal Foch demanded that the Reich should liquidate the whole affair by August 20. This time the German Government was obliged to submit and sent immediate orders in that sense to General von der Goltz. The latter was informed, in particular, that he must evacuate the troops to Germany, that the officers or men who refused to return would be discharged from the Army and not receive any more pay, and that recruiting in Germany would henceforth be prohibited.

Von der Goltz and his officers decided to stay in Latvia, in defiance of the orders of the Government.

They were now acting on their own account. On September 21 the Commander of the troops in the Baltic concluded a regular treaty with an adventurer, a Russian ex-officer named Bermond-Avaloff, who had just proclaimed a so-called Government of Western Russia. Under this treaty, von der Goltz, who had resigned from the German Army, together with his officers and 50,000 soldiers, henceforth acted as mercenaries for the Russian adventurer.

The crusade against the Red Army began by an attack by Bermond-Avaloff's German and White Russian troops against Riga and the Ulmanis Government. Hostilities continued during October and November, 1919, but without visible result. However, the inter-Allied military mission which installed itself in Berlin in November, exerted considerable pressure on Noske to liquidate the Baltic adventure. Noske was now obliged to make a real effort to prevent the despatch of fresh volunteers, food and war material from Germany to the Baltic troops. But the

leaders of these troops still refused to obey the injunctions of the Government. Then the Latvians, with the aid of war material received from the Allies, began to beat the German troops, who in the second half of November found themselves faced with disaster. On November 30 the German troops were completely expelled from Latvia and driven into Lithuanian territory. In the course of the first half of December, the volunteer corps in the Baltic reached East Prussia. The Baltic adventure was over.

None of the German officers who for four months had refused to obey the orders of the Government was brought before a court martial. Noske refused to punish them. Yet these thousands of Baltic officers and soldiers were animated by a counter-revolutionary spirit. They were either incorporated with the Reichswehr or demobilised. In either case, they constituted the vanguard of counter-revolution.

The deferential attitude of Ebert and Noske towards the officers is still better illustrated by an incident which occurred at the beginning of October, 1919. Colonel Rheinhardt, who commanded some troops in Berlin, made a speech to the soldiers, in the course of which he called the Government "a pack of rascals." When Scheidemann dared publicly to criticise this thoughtless insult, Ebert and Noske reproached him for this, saying that they had no intention of punishing such a gifted officer. Ebert rather naively added: "You must take into account that Rheinhardt did not think his words to the troops would be reported in the newspapers."<sup>1</sup> As to Noske, "he stuck to the theory that an Imperial officer who made no attempt to disguise his Royalist sympathies was more acceptable to him than an officer who fancied himself a Republican."<sup>2</sup> The attitude of the Socialist leaders is best explained by the following observation of Loebe, who later became Reichstag Speaker: "The Cabinet's chief worry was that the Reichswehr would be dissolved and they would have no protection against Spartacists and robbers."<sup>3</sup> But they forgot that a *coup d'état* was more likely to come from the Right. That was why, in 1920, they were taken

<sup>1</sup> Philip Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, London, 1929, Vol. II., p. 642.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 646.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 655.

unawares by the putsch of Kapp and Luettwitz, and why the equivocal attitude of the Reichswehr was an entirely unexpected surprise to them.

*War Criminals Farce—Parliamentary Inquiry into Events  
Preceding the Defeat—The Stab-in-the-Back Legend.*

In October, 1919, the Democrats, who had left the Government at the time of the discussions on the signing of the Versailles Treaty, resumed collaboration with the Centre and the Socialists, and were again represented in the Government.

On November 1, 1919, the Allies presented to the German Government a list of 896 Germans accused, under Art. 228 of the Versailles Treaty, of having committed acts contrary to the laws and customs of war; the Allies demanded their extradition, so that they might appear before Allied courts. This list of war criminals included, among others, engineers charged with the systematic destruction of factories during the German retreat from Northern France, naval officers who had torpedoed merchant ships without warning, doctors who had refused to attend to wounded or sick prisoners of war, and even a woman who had ill-treated prisoners of war. In addition to the war criminals guilty of atrocities, the Allies had also put on the list the names of the military and political leaders of Imperial Germany as being responsible for the conduct of the war. Under this heading the following were included: The Crown Prince, the Crown Prince of Bavaria, ex-Chancellors Bethmann-Hollweg and Michaelis, Count Bernsdorff, German ex-Ambassador at Washington, Marshals Hindenburg and Mackensen, Generals Ludendorff and von Falkenhayn, Admirals von Tirpitz and von Scheer. Of the 896 criminals, Britain demanded the extradition of 97, Belgium of 334, France of 334, while the others were required by other Allies.

The German Government simply refused to carry out Art. 228 of the Treaty and to deliver the criminals. On the other hand, it offered to have these persons tried by the Reich Supreme Court at Leipzig. The Allies not only hastened to accept this suggestion, but also agreed to reduce their list from 896 to 45 names, those of persons

who had committed the most atrocious crimes. Of these 45 persons, some, with the connivance of the German authorities, mysteriously disappeared, while others appeared before the Supreme Court only in 1921. The Court sentenced only nine persons, and even those only to terms of imprisonment of from nine months to two years. The others were acquitted. The accused appeared before the Court with bunches of flowers given them by the public, who treated them as heroes, though their "heroism" consisted in torpedoing hospital ships, murdering prisoners of war, and other similar acts. The convicted persons were given every facility to escape from prison.<sup>1</sup> The final result was complete impunity for the war criminals. This was as much the fault of the Allies as of the Government of the German Republic. At all events, the German Army was able to launch the second war in the conviction that atrocities committed during hostilities were legitimate, since they had not been punished after the first war.

In the light of the events of the second world war, one can appreciate all the better the profound wisdom of what Mr Lloyd George said on September 13, 1919 :

"The first indispensable condition, in my judgment, is that civilisation shall establish beyond doubt its power to enforce its decrees. . . . Prussian military power must not only be beaten, but Germany herself must know that. The German people must know that if their rulers outrage the laws of humanity, Prussian military strength cannot protect them from punishment. There is no right you can establish, national or international, unless you establish the fact that the man who breaks the law will meet inevitable punishment. Unless this is accomplished, the loss, the suffering, and the burdens of this war have been in vain."

On January 10, 1920, the Allies approached the Dutch Government, requesting the extradition of the Kaiser who, under Article 227 of the Peace Treaty, was to be tried for violating the rules of international morality and the principle of the sanctity of treaties. The Dutch Government refused, and the affair was considered as closed. Thus the Fuehrer of the first German war was able to stay in the Netherlands, and see, in 1940, German troops

<sup>1</sup> Five former army commanders were allowed to publish in the newspapers on January 7, 1920, an appeal advising their comrades to escape: "We believe that it is not against the honour of a German officer to fly from the authorities of the German Government or the Allies. In no case must we give ourselves up of our own free will."

invading the country that gave him refuge—upon the orders of the Fuehrer of the second German war.

In November, 1919, some Deputies of the Left took the initiative with a view to instituting an inquiry into the events that had led to the German defeat. What they had in mind was to throw a light on the attitude of the General Staff and put an end to the stab-in-the-back legend that was beginning to be credited in Germany. This legend was publicly expressed by Hindenburg in his book, *Aus meinem Leben*, which was published in September, 1919, and in which he confirmed the lie of an unvanquished German Army being stabbed in the back by the internal Revolution: "Like Siegfried, stricken down by the treacherous spear of savage Hagen, our weary front collapsed."

The National Assembly appointed a commission of inquiry, which summoned Hindenburg and Ludendorff to the bar as principal witnesses. It also summoned other prominent personages of the old régime. However, the time for such an inquiry was long past. The Revolution had been crushed. Popular public opinion was again in favour of the Army. The sittings of the Commission were cleverly turned by the witnesses to the advantage of the General Staff and to the disadvantage of the Republican parties. On November 12, Helfferich, the notorious nationalist and former Under Secretary of State under William II, tried to make Erzberger into a scapegoat for the mistakes of the imperial régime and the Army. Speaking before the Commission, he launched a violent diatribe against him: "You are looking for the cause of our ruin? Well, I will tell you: it is Erzberger, whose name will forever remain linked with Germany's shame and misery! There is only one chance of salvation for Germany: the cry, Out with Erzberger! must resound from one end of the country to the other!"

Helfferich continued his campaign against the Minister of Finance in the newspaper *Kreuzzeitung*. To gauge the renascent influence of nationalist circles in Germany, it is sufficient to recall that this campaign of hate produced the desired result: in January, 1920, Erzberger was attacked and wounded by a demobilised officer, von Hirschfeld; on March 12, 1920, he yielded to the wave of unpopularity

roused against him and retired from the Government; and on August 26, 1921, he succumbed to the bullets of ex-officers affiliated to the nationalist organisations.<sup>1</sup>

The real object of the campaign against Erzberger was to discredit all the parties who supported the Government of Prince Max of Baden, thus preparing the way for the return of a purely nationalist and reactionary régime.

On November 18, Hindenburg and Ludendorff appeared before the Commission. The Government overwhelmed Hindenburg with honours during his stay in Berlin. He was brought from Hannover to Berlin in a saloon coach, was awaited by a guard of honour at the railway station, was given aides-de-camp, military sentries were detailed to guard the villa where he stayed, and the public were allowed to decorate the witness box in the room of the Commission with bunches of flowers tied with ribbons in the imperial colours. Yet this was a Government of the Left, headed by a Socialist Chancellor.

The aged Generalissimo easily forgot his role as witness and turned accuser. He made a violent attack, before the Commission, against the parties of the Left, adding his authority to the stab-in-the-back legend. This was his accusation :

"While in the enemy countries all classes of the population drew ever closer in a sacred unity, in our country—where such unity was even more necessary owing to our numerical inferiority—party dissensions were beginning to come to light. . . .

"We were no longer supported by the Hinterland, and we had to live in constant fear of its collapse. It was at that time that the Navy and Army were made the object of a systematic campaign of disintegration. . . .

"The plans of the High Command could not be carried out. In the circumstances our operations were doomed to defeat. The collapse was inevitable. The Revolution was only the final outcome. . . . The German Army was stabbed in the back. . . . The sound elements of our Army could not be reproached with any fault. Their exploits, like those of our corps of officers, were admirable. The guilty ones are elsewhere, and their responsibility is clearly established."

These pleadings were nothing but a tissue of lies. The aged Marshal knew that better than anyone else, yet he added the whole weight of his authority to the legend that was then beginning to gain ground. He did so partly with

<sup>1</sup> The murderers : Schulz and Tillessen were both members of the secret organisation "Consul."



the dual aim of discrediting the Left, and of paving the way for the return of the Right to power, but chiefly in order to shift the responsibility from the High Command and to restore to the German people their faith in the invincibility of their Army. If the Germans had felt that they had been beaten on the battlefield, there would have been little hope of success for the idea of a *revanche*. But if they allowed themselves to be convinced that the invincible German Army had been stabbed in the back by the Extreme Left, they would feel the injustice of the Versailles Treaty all the more keenly, turn their hatred against the traitors at home and the perfidious foreigner, and allow themselves to be drawn into another war. The Marshal lied in order to save the martial spirit of his people, just as Ebert had lied when he said to the army returning from the Front that it had not been vanquished.

The public received the Marshal's evidence with delirious joy. He was feted during his short stay in Berlin. For the rest, the best the Government could think of offering him was an escort of honour on his departure from the capital.

## CHAPTER VII

### REVIVAL OF THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

#### RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SOVIET RUSSIA

*Bloody Repression of Workers' Demonstration in Berlin—  
Split among the Generals—Putsch by Kapp and  
Luettwitz—"The Reichswehr will not Fire on the  
Reichswehr"—Workers Save Government, Government  
Deserts Workers*

IN January, 1920, Berlin again witnessed bloody repression of the workers. On the 13th, the Independent Socialists and the Communists organised a public demonstration by way of protest against some proposed social legislation which they considered detrimental to the working class. The procession of demonstrators proceeded peaceably through the streets to the Reichstag building—and there the police suddenly opened fire on them. The crowd scattered, leaving 42 killed and 102 injured. The person responsible for this incident was Wolfgang Heine, Prussian Minister of the Interior (Majority Socialist).

In the same month the Reichswehr entered the new phase of its existence. Its effectives were to be progressively reduced to 100,000 men under the Treaty of Versailles, which had come into force in January 1920.

The officers of the Reichswehr were thrown into a ferment of agitation; they were furious to see that the tool they had forged with so much effort was going to be broken, and that at least 300,000 men who had enlisted in the provisional Reichswehr and were imbued with the spirit of the old Army, would have to be discharged. The officers were divided as to the tactics to be followed—an almost unique state of affairs in the German Army. The more impulsive among them were for open resistance and proposed to maintain the Reichswehr intact in defiance of the Peace Treaty, and wanted to organise a rebellion directed both against the Government and the Allies. The

leader of this section was General von Luettwitz, commander of the Reichswehr in North Germany. The other section, headed by Generals von Seeckt and von Reinhardt (Prussian War Minister), viewed the matter far more calmly. They realised that resistance to the Allies would have no chance of success. On the other hand, they knew that the influence of the corps of officers could not be maintained without the support of the Government. They held that the situation was not yet ripe for a reversion to a government of the Right, and that it was best to continue the alliance contracted with the Socialists in November, 1918. Thus the impulsive ones, whose partisans were recruited chiefly from among the Prussian officers and the soldiers who had returned from the Baltic countries, were for immediate action; while the other party remained faithful to the tradition of General von Groener and preferred to temporise rather than stake all on a single card. At successive meetings held on the premises of General von Luettwitz the two groups failed to come to an agreement, and General von Luettwitz therefore decided to ignore the views of the moderates and act on his own account. He got into touch with the "Nationale Vereinigung," a nationalist organization headed by a former Prussian high official named Wolfgang Kapp. This organization maintained contact with General Ludendorff through the intermediary of his right-hand man, Colonel Bauer. Luettwitz had already had an interview with Kapp on August 21, 1919. In September, 1919, Luettwitz began to make the Government feel that if the occasion arose he would be prepared to act on his own account. He and the Kapp organization now set about preparing a *coup d'état*.

On March 1, 1920, the second marine Brigade, which was stationed near Berlin and was commanded by Corvette Captain Ehrhardt, was celebrating the second anniversary of its formation as a volunteer corps. The Brigade was inspected by General von Luettwitz, who made a speech, concluding with words that sounded like a call to rebellion: "I would not tolerate it that such a fine body of troops should be broken up at such a stormy time." The parties of the Right in the National Assembly were no less afraid of the possibility of premature action than the moderate

officers. Heinze and Hergt, the leaders of the parliamentary nationalist fractions, offered their good offices to act as intermediaries between General von Luettwitz and the Government. The proposition they suggested was the dissolution of the National Assembly and new Reichstag elections. However, on March 9, 1920, they brought to Luettwitz the Government's refusal. On March 10 Generals von Luettwitz, von Oldershausen and von Oven themselves presented their political program to President Ebert, as follows: Dissolution of the National Assembly and Reichstag elections; a new Presidential election by popular vote; formation of a government of experts; and a promise not to discharge any more troops in conformity with the Peace Treaty. Ebert rejected these demands, and was supported in this by Noske, who was also present at the interview. Luettwitz then decided to unleash the conflict, although the parties of the Right had informed him that they could not support him. The Government, anticipating the storm, relieved Luettwitz of his command on March 11. Luettwitz replied by ordering the volunteer corps and other troops under his command to march on Berlin. On the night of March 12-13, Luettwitz's troops began to occupy the city. The members of the Ehrhardt Brigade wore swastikas on their helmets—an emblem adopted by the German anti-Semites long before Hitler and National Socialism. Noske appealed to the Reichswehr officers who had always opposed the plans of the ambitious Luettwitz, and in particular to General von Seeckt. To his stupefaction, the latter refused to side with the Government: "The Reichswehr will not fire on the Reichswehr," he said. This refusal did not mean that von Seeckt had changed his mind and had ranged himself with the rebels. But it did mean that even those officers who were hostile to Luettwitz preferred neutrality to an armed struggle with their comrades, which might have broken up the moral force behind the army—the solidarity of the corps of officers. Noske, feeling deserted, advised the Government to leave the capital. On March 13, Ebert, together with the whole of the Government, removed to Dresden. Erzberger did not accompany them, for, not wishing to embarrass the Government, he had resigned the previous day; the nationalist attacks upon him

had become so violent that he preferred to retire from politics.<sup>1</sup>

Ebert, Noske, Mueller, and other Socialists were now in a position to see the fragility of their alliance with the officers. The latter were always ready to defend them against the workers, but had deserted them at the first revolt from the Right. Unfortunately, even this harsh lesson failed to teach them anything. On arrival in Dresden they were surprised by the doubtful attitude of General Maercker, the military commander of Saxony, who even talked of placing the Government under preventive detention. The Government were so disquieted that they moved on to Stuttgart.

Meanwhile, the whole of Berlin was occupied by the volunteer corps. Kapp proclaimed himself head of the Government and appointed Luettwitz Commander-in-Chief and Reichswehr Minister. Luettwitz immediately surrounded himself with devoted followers, like Colonel Bauer and General von der Goltz.

On the evening of March 13 the situation was as follows: The troops in the North and East had ranged themselves behind Luettwitz, while those in the South and West remained neutral, with a bias in favour of the Government. Thus the rebellion was confined to Berlin and Northern Germany.

In Bavaria there was a putsch of a local character. On the night of March 13-14, the troops and Orgesch volunteer corps mutinied and drove out the Government of the Socialist Hoffmann. A Government of the Right headed by von Kahr came into power, but immediately decided to remain neutral as regards the struggle between Ebert and Kapp. In this it was following the example of the nationalist and moderate parties represented in the Assembly (Centre, Democrats, German People's Party,

<sup>1</sup> Erzberger's resignation had been precipitated by the judgment of the court before which he had sued Helfferich for slander. The latter had been carrying on a violent campaign against Erzberger in the *Neue Preussische Kreuzzeitung*, accusing him, among other things, of having used his political position for personal enrichment. The court, while fining Helfferich 300 marks, agreed that the accusations were partly true and that Erzberger had in fact used his political influence for his personal advantage. He had, among others, served the interests of Thyssen, the great Rhineland industrialist, to the detriment of State interests. The judgment, which reflected on the probity of the leader of the Centre, was subsequently thoroughly exploited against the Weimar régime. Erzberger tendered his resignation the day the judgment was delivered—on March 12, 1920.

and German National Party) which had dissociated themselves from the Kapp-Luettwitz movement already on the evening of the 13th.

The Government found itself in a painful situation. The Reichswehr, on which it had relied for eighteen months, had deserted it, one half being engaged in an armed struggle against it and the other half taking refuge in neutrality and refusing to help the Government. Now at last the Majority Socialists remembered those who had raised them to power on November 11, 1918, to wit, the workers. The Social Democratic Party and the trade unions issued an appeal for a general strike. The workers whose comrades had been massacred in Berlin on the orders of the same Socialists as recently as January of the same year, responded. The strike began on the afternoon of March 14. The factories emptied, trains, trams, and buses stopped, the provisioning of the capital was interrupted, and there was no water, gas, or electricity. On March 15 the capital of Germany seemed a dead city. The firm attitude of the workers exerted an influence even on Luettwitz's troops; on March 16 and 17 there were cases of mutiny in the Berlin garrison. "At one single stroke," said Luettwitz, "the situation had become extremely grave. . . . There was nothing left for me to do but to liquidate the affair."

On March 17, Kapp relinquished power and fled from Germany. Luettwitz, deserted by his officers, resigned, handed over command of the troops in Northern Germany to General von Seeckt, and similarly fled abroad.

The Government triumphed thanks to the general strike, which had smashed the vital forces of the leaders of the rebellion. Was it going to draw the right political conclusions from this? Was it thenceforth going to support the workers and break its alliance with the generals?

The answer was provided immediately after the collapse of the putsch. On March 18 the Government returned to Berlin. Its first act was to appoint von Seeckt head of the Reichswehr. The trade unions, Independents and Communists demanded a radical purge of the corps of officers and of the Civil Service and severe punishment of those guilty of the plot. The leaders of the Kapp movement did not wait for the Government's decision, but fled

abroad, like Kapp and Luettwitz. Ludendorff, who had supported the movement, fled to Bavaria under an assumed name. Captain Ehrhardt fled to Austria, like his colleague, Captain Pabst, who thenceforth devoted himself to the organisation of the Austrian Heimwehr. The flight of the most prominent members of the movement enormously relieved the situation of the Government, which was being subjected to considerable pressure not only by General von Seeckt, but even by Hindenburg and Groener who, from their retreat, were interceding for clemency. Ebert gave way, renewing his alliance with the Army and promulgating an amnesty for the soldiers and subordinate officers who had taken part in the putsch. This measure impelled a German author of the Left to write "that the purge was only half completed and that the Republic missed the unique chance that presented itself to establish a democratic régime on the ruins of German militarism." The only important concession made to the workers was the resignation of Noske, who on March 22 was obliged to relinquish his office to Gessler, a Democratic Deputy, who now became Reichswehr Minister.

The workers realised that they had been cheated by Ebert and other Majority Socialists and that they had saved them in vain. They realised that the Socialists had no intention of touching German militarism or of making any change whatever in the existing régime. They realised that they were being defrauded of the fruits of their victory, as they had been in November 1918. Their anger knew no bounds. In the Ruhr Basin they broke into open revolt. The Government showed its gratitude to the workers by ordering the Reichswehr to suppress the revolt. General Watter, commander of the troops in the Ruhr, was assisted in this task by the Socialist Severing, who was appointed Reich Commissar for the territory. The Reichswehr conquered one town after another. Despite fierce resistance on the part of the workers, Bochum, Dortmund, Essen, and other industrial centres finally surrendered. Order was completely restored by the end of April. History had repeated itself: the alliance of the Socialists and generals had triumphed over the workers.

On March 26, 1920, after Noske's resignation, Ebert

reconstructed the Government. Bauer was replaced as Chancellor by Hermann Mueller, who gave the portfolio of Foreign Affairs to Koester, another Socialist. The new Government was a coalition of the Majority Socialists, the Democrats and the Centre.

*Reichstag Elections—Ebert Remains President—First Republican Government without the Socialists.*

The elections for the first Republican Reichstag took place on June 6 and resulted in the defeat of the Government parties. The people had lost confidence in them. The election figures were as follows :

1. Majority Socialists	...	112 mandates	(5,600,000)
2. Independent Socialists	...	81	„ (4,895,000)
3. Communists	...	2	„ ( 440,000)
4. Democrats	...	45	„ (2,200,000)
5. Centre	...	68	„ (3,300,000)
6. Bavarian People's Party	...	18	„ (1,115,000)
7. People's Party	...	62	„ (3,600,000)
8. German Nationals	...	66	„ (3,700,000)
9. Minor Parties	...	12	„

The Majority Socialists had lost nearly half of their electors ; the Democrats and the Centre more than half ; the Independents, on the other hand, had doubled their figures. But, the real gainers were the parties of the Right—the German Nationals and the People's Party—which together polled 7,300,000 votes. The failure of the Socialists was paving the way for nationalist reaction.

Ebert, the protégé of the Reichswehr, was by general consent of the political parties left in office as President of the Republic without a Presidential election.

In view of the new composition of the Reichstag, Ebert on June 21, 1920, appointed Herr Fehrenbach, a Centre Deputy and former Speaker of the National Assembly, as Reich Chancellor. Fehrenbach formed a purely bourgeois Government, with no Socialists. The preponderant position held up till then by the Majority Socialists was taken by the Catholic Centre, and this opened the period of Governments composed of the moderate parties. However, the Fehrenbach Government could not rely exclusively on the



Centre and Democrats because these two parties did not possess a majority in the Reichstag, so the new coalition also included one of the two parties of the Right—the People's Party, which had taken over the heritage of the former National Liberal Party. It was the mouthpiece of industry and was in no way behind the German National Party as regards aggressive nationalism. The most prominent members of the People's Party were H. Stinnes and G. Stresemann. (The People's Party held three portfolios in the Fehrenbach Government). The Republic seems to have travelled a long way since the Revolution to have to seek counsel with the industrialists and nationalists.

In addition to the Populist, Centrist, and Democratic Ministers, the Government also included two non-Party Ministers—the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Simons, former legal adviser to the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Communications, General von Groener, last Quartermaster-General of the Imperial Army. The régime had passed, but the men remained. The Reichswehr portfolio remained in the hands of Gessler, a Democrat, who held this post in the successive Governments until 1928. Chancellors came and went, the Socialists were in and out of the Government and the composition of the Governments was continually changing, but Gessler remained fixed in his post. Was he a man of outstanding brilliance? No—but he possessed the merit of being the docile instrument of the Reichswehr. He took the responsibility for the activities of the new High Command, headed by General von Seeckt. The Reichswehr defended its Minister, for his intangibility was a guarantee of its own political autonomy. The Reichswehr had become a State within the State, and Gessler acted as its Ambassador to the different Reich Governments.

### *The Head of the Reichswehr and his Ideas.*

The formation of the new Reichswehr, with effectives as demanded by the Treaty of Versailles, was entrusted to General von Seeckt. He had been chosen by Ebert and the Government of the Socialist Chancellor Bauer. The Majority Socialist Party shared with the Democrats and the Centre the political responsibility for the appointment

of this Prussian general as the head of the new Army. It was left to him to mould the political spirit of the Republican Army. The result is only too well known. But what was the political credo of this secular arm of the Republic? It is sufficient to glance at the books he wrote, and in particular at his *The Future of the German Empire*, to realise that von Seeckt was a Prussian officer to the marrow.<sup>1</sup> His God was the State, his morality, force. Here are a few extracts from the above mentioned book :

"Right and the law need Might that stands behind them, in home as in foreign relationships. Might must often, too, precede Right in order, in the first place, to gain its admission and recognition. Might always fashions Right, for the strong accept no laws from the weak." (P. 129.)

"Home policy has, first of all, to build up and maintain the strong State itself, whose Might will be represented abroad and applied in the interest of the State." (P. 145.)

"Within the country there is only State justice; outside of it, only Might. Code, law and justice are derived from Might and created by it." (P. 90.)

"Treaties, alliances, pacts, associations, are, of course, not made for all eternity, and the reservation 'rebus sic stantibus' in all of them is an understood secret clause." (P. 149.)

"It is really no easy matter to conduct German foreign policy to-day. But its goal should not be left in doubt, it is the restoration of Germany as a Might State." (P. 153.)

"The Treaty of Versailles blocks the objective of German foreign policy. . . . Its abrogation is the arena of German foreign policy, and for this struggle it stands in need of Might, the creation of which is its first task." (P. 154.)

One might be tempted to say that Hitler in 1933 could not have defined the aims of Reich foreign policy very differently. However, von Seeckt displayed a remarkable objectivity with reference to the problem of Reparations :

"We ought, after all, not to forget that on our side, too, in the event of victory, we should have demanded similar payments." (P. 159.)

Von Seeckt's aims in the international domains—abrogation of the Versailles Treaty and restoration of the power of the Reich—did not displease the Socialists, Centre and Democrats, and it may have blinded them to the general's credo as regards home policy—his disdain for Parliament and his clear adherence to the principle of

<sup>1</sup> *The Future of the German Empire*, London, 1930.

"leadership." Here are some of his views in this connection :

"The power of the State emanates from a people in which every man feels responsible to his own self and to the community, and responsible, too, for conscientiously allowing himself to be led ; for it is not the mass that leads, but only Personality." (P. 27.)

"The Nation is too busy to trouble its head about political problems and prefers, when all is said and done, to be well governed, no matter by whom or under what form, to have much inclination to take the business of government in hand itself. It is necessary to realise all this to get rid of the mistake of seeing an accurate reflection of the people's will in Parliament" (P. 118-119.)

Speaking of the head of the State as the Germans recently spoke of the Fuehrer, he says :

"In him we have the conception (of the State) transmuted into terms of personality whose will is subject to one law only—*Solus rei publicae Summa Lex*" (P. 183.)

This was the man who undertook the formidable task of reconstituting the Reichswehr.

As already mentioned, General von Seeckt, who had been the military expert of the German Delegation at the Peace Conference, had been appointed on July 5, 1919, Chairman of the Preparatory Commission of the peace-time Army. He began his task by reconstructing the General Staff. The old General Staff had been dissolved under Art. 160 of the Peace Treaty. But already on July 9, 1919, von Seeckt became the head of an "Allgemeines Truppenamt" whose organization bore a singular resemblance to that of the old General Staff. Actually, the only thing that had been abolished was the name ; the institution remained.<sup>1</sup> On March 18, 1920, Ebert appointed General von Seeckt Generalissimo, that is, supreme head of the *Heeresleitung*. When he was appointed head of the

<sup>1</sup> General von Seeckt could rely upon the discreet assistance of nearly all Germany in his immense task of secret rearmament. In this connection the following from *This Age of Fable* (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1942), by Gustav Stelper, a German writer of the Left, is illuminating : "The writer will never forget his last conversation with the greatest German sociologist and one of the greatest liberals of modern Germany, Max Weber, in his Seminar at the University of Munich a few months before the latter's death in 1920. When asked about his political plans, Weber (who had been a member of the German Delegation at Versailles), smiled sadly, then answered : 'I have no political plans except to concentrate all my intellectual strength on the one problem how to get a great General Staff for Germany once more.'"

Reichswehr, von Seeckt handed over his office as Director of the *Truppenamt* to General von Heye. Having reconstructed the High Command and the General Staff, and having adorned them with new names in accordance with the letter of the Peace Treaty, General von Seeckt set about organizing the cadres of the Army.

"The error of all those who organize armies," he wrote in his book, *Die Reichswehr* (Berlin, 1933), "is that they regard the existing state of affairs as permanent. They forget that nations change incessantly and that in order to remain a live force, the army must model itself on the curve of events."

Von Seeckt himself was careful to avoid this error. From the outset, he was convinced that the Reichswehr of 100,000 men would be replaced, sooner or later, by a national army. Thus the Reichswehr had to be conceived as a cadre, a framework, for the future army, which was to be based on conscription. Accordingly, von Seeckt continually raised the standard of training for the Reichswehr, in order to make it, as he himself said: "Not into an army of mercenaries but into an army of leaders."

As to the raw material for his army, the head of the *Heeresleitung* had ample choice. There were the 350,000 men and 40,000 officers of the provisional Reichswehr, and all he had to do was to pick and choose. A rigid standard was applied and the new army took only the best of the best. In accordance with this principle, the 100,000 men of the Reichswehr were in 1924 composed of 4,000 officers, 51,000 non-commissioned officers (21,000 sergeants and 30,000 corporals) and only 44,000 privates—but the training of the latter was equivalent to that of sergeants in short-term armies.

With the Reichswehr thus organized, Hitler had no difficulty in building up the thirty-five conscript divisions which he formed on March 16, 1935. The Reichswehr contained an abundant number of officers and non-commissioned officers who had been in training for fifteen years, though under the disguise of inferior ranks. Without the Reichswehr of Weimar, Hitler's army could not have sprung up from the soil of Germany with that lightning rapidity that has surprised the whole world.

*The Nationalist Organisations*

Ever since November 11, 1918, the entire corps of officers was animated by the idea of revenge. But the successive events showed that there were two different tendencies within it. The moderate elements among the officers wanted to work slowly but surely on the rebuilding of German military power; they avoided getting embroiled with the successive Republican Governments, whose collaboration they considered indispensable for the achievement of their aim, and they also refrained from defying the Allies, the better to lull their vigilance.

The other, fanatical section wanted to scorch ahead, to place themselves into open opposition to the Allies and to overthrow the Republic by means of a putsch. The most prominent man among the obstreperous element was General von Lüttwitz, military leader of the Kapp putsch; von Seeckt was the leader of the moderates. What distinguished the two sections from each other was not a matter of ideology, but one of temperament. They all wanted to restore a militarist and nationalist Germany, and were divided only by questions of method. The failure of the Kapp putsch and the appointment of General von Seeckt as Commander-in-Chief of the Reichswehr ensured victory for the moderate tendency within the Reichswehr. General von Seeckt accepted into it none but elements of his own persuasion, carefully eliminating turbulent and exalted temperaments. Officers of the type of Pabst, Rossbach, and Ehrhardt were barred.

This type now sought refuge with the nationalist organizations, whose precise connection with the Reichswehr it is difficult to disentangle. The Reichswehr tolerated these illegal and generally secret associations, and sometimes it even viewed them with sympathy, for they were composed of former comrades-in-arms, and the officers of the Reichswehr were animated by the same spirit of militarist nationalism as the officers who had ceased to serve and had joined the patriotic organizations. The split on tactics never developed into an unbridgeable gulf. On the contrary, the Reichswehr did nothing to make the existence of these numerous organizations difficult, and perhaps even secretly supported them. However, there is

reason to assume that the funds that were indispensable for the continuance of these associations were furnished chiefly by heavy industry, which regarded them as the "Praetorian guard" against the proletariat.

When we speak of the semi-military associations, we must draw a fundamental distinction between the secret ones and those bearing an official character. The latter were formed with the active assistance of the Government for the purpose of evading, under various different pretexts, the provisions of the Peace Treaty and augmenting the military effectives by adding to the 100,000 men of the Reichswehr the effectives of militia organizations. These were: The *Volkswehren* (civic guards guarding the military barracks, and urban police forces), the *Zeitfreiwillige* (volunteers engaged for a period of three months and destined to serve as a reserve for the Reichswehr), the *Technische Nothilfe* (technicians of all kinds, whose task was to run the public services under the direct orders of the Reichswehr in case of a strike), and the *Einwohnerwehren* (a kind of Home Guard whose task was to maintain order in case of revolutionary troubles). It will be noted that these organizations were designed not only to provide the Reichswehr with additional effectives if necessary, but also to prevent any revolutionary movement from succeeding. The Reichswehr had learned the lesson of the general strike that had smashed the Kapp movement, that was why it reinforced itself with such organizations as the *Technische Nothilfe* and the *Einwohnerwehren*. The Government, though it owed its survival to that general strike of March, 1920, gave the generals a free hand and its patronage to the anti-revolutionary organizations.

The Allies repeatedly protested against the existence of the semi-military associations, which were contrary to Arts. 177 and 178 of the Peace Treaty, under which no armed organizations besides the Reichswehr and the police were permitted. The German Government gave way only in May, 1921, when it was confronted with an ultimatum that left no room for delay. It was only then that the organizations of the type described were dissolved throughout Germany though secret training by the Reichswehr continued.

In addition to these official semi-military organizations there was a considerable number of secret associations

which continued to exist and develop despite and against the Government. They were unequivocally anti-Weimar and dreamt only of a putsch. These illegal volunteer corps, which had been organized by ex-officers of the former provisional Reichswehr, bore various names—either those of their leaders or those of historical characters. There were, for example, the Rossbach, Consul, Oberland, Aulock, Heydebrecht, Orgesch, Arnim, Vikingbund and many other free corps. It should be noted, incidentally, that in 1921 the Government and the Reichswehr drew on these clandestine organizations for volunteers to be sent against the Polish population in Upper Silesia; the number of volunteers employed there amounted to 40,000. These secret associations received funds from the industrialists and junkers, their members found refuge in the mansions of the nobility, and they possessed arms and munitions, as well as their own so-called Vehme courts. These courts frequently sentenced moderate politicians to death and the hundreds of judgments delivered by them were duly executed. The Republic, whose authority had been irremediably compromised by the ill-omened policy of the Socialists, could no longer guarantee security for its statesmen; Erzberger, Auer, Rathenau, and many others fell victims to Vehme murderers. A German author has calculated that the total membership of the secret associations in 1923 amounted to 250,000. Their total equipment comprised 150,000 rifles, 1,500,000 rounds of ammunition, and 2,000 light and 500 heavy machine guns.<sup>1</sup> However, there is reason to believe that the true figures were considerably higher. For example, Dr Schweyer, the Bavarian State Secretary on April 13, 1921, estimated that one Bavarian semi-military organization alone—the "Orgesch," which had been created by a man named Escherich and Dr Kahr, former Bavarian Premier—had 320,000 members, with 240,000 rifles, 2,780 machine guns, 44 cannons, and 34 howitzers.<sup>2</sup>

Later, Hitler drew heavily on the secret associations in recruiting his S.S. and S.A.

The illegal activities of the secret associations were facilitated not only by the sympathetic attitude of the

<sup>1</sup> E. J. Gumbel, *Vier Jahre politischer Mord*, Berlin, 1924, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> H. S. Daniels, *The Rise of the German Republic*, London, 1927, p. 158.

industrialists and the junkers, but also by the complicity of the courts. The judges, who were generally imbued with the same nationalist spirit, appeared to be most reluctant to convict members of these associations for illegal, and often even criminal acts. They compensated their leniency towards the nationalists by extreme severity towards any person who dared to hold radical Leftist views or who ventured to reveal that Germany was secretly re-arming. In view of the gross partiality of the judgments of the Reich courts, it would be difficult to apply to that period the saying of the 18th century: "There are still some judges left in Berlin."

### *Inglorious End of Independent Socialists*

At the end of 1920 there was a split in the Independent Socialist Party. The Left wing of the Party joined the Communist organization, the two groups in December forming a unified Communist Party, which became affiliated to the Third International. The Right wing, which retained the name of the original Party and was represented by Breitscheid, Hilferding, Ledebour, and others, continued for a time as a separate organization. But in September, 1922, it decided to join the Majority Party. This decision was taken by a great majority of votes against Ledebour, who refused to subordinate himself to the Social Democratic leaders whom he had been fighting since 1915. At the time of the fusion the Majority Party had a membership of 1,200,000 and 139 journals, while the Independents had a membership of 290,000 and 43 journals.

It was in this inglorious manner that the Independent Party, which had written such fine pages in its history during the war and had had the courage to break with the Social Democrats in order to fight freely for peace and true democracy in Germany, ended its career. It capitulated under the psychological pressure of its social environment.

### *Walter Rathenau*

In 1920 and 1921 there were protracted negotiations between the Allies and Germany concerning Reparations. In the course of these negotiations a remarkable man came



to the forefront in German political life. His name was Walter Rathenau. He was the son and successor of Emil Rathenau, creator of the immense A.E.G. (General Electric Company) electrical trust, which shared the domain of electricity with Siemens & Schuckert, another German trust, not only in Germany, but also in several foreign countries. He was, as he himself wrote in an article in the *Neue Freie Presse* in 1909, one of the "three hundred men, all acquainted with each other, who control the economic destiny of the Continent." He directed 86 German and 21 other Continental and extra-European undertakings, and though his chief interest lay in electricity, he was also interested in other industries. He was one of the barons of German industry. Like Ballin, owner of the H.A.P.A.G. of Hamburg and the Kaiser's friend, Rathenau was of Jewish origin, but this did not prevent him from being a fervent German patriot. His name was no less important in the economic life of his country than those of Krupp-Bohlen, Prince Henkel-Donnersmarck, Ballin, Hagen, Stinnes, Thyssen, Schuckert, etc.

After the outbreak of war in 1914, Walter Rathenau offered his services to the Government and the General Staff, and he was entrusted with the organization of the supply of raw materials. As head of the appropriate department, he was also in charge of requisitions in the occupied countries. He was convinced of the necessity of basing German hegemony on an economic bloc comprising Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, and Belgium—a sort of *Mitteleuropa*, so dear to the hearts of many Pan-Germans, but reinforced with France and Belgium. Rathenau expounded his ideas in two clubs which served as unofficial venues of co-operation between the General Staff, the Government, Members of Parliament, journalists, industrialists, bankers, junkers and others playing an important role in public life. One of these clubs was called "*Deutsche Gesellschaft 1914*" and the other—the more important of the two—"Mittwochs-Gesellschaft." The latter was formed by Professor Ludwig Stein and Bassermann, leader of the National Liberal Party and spiritual parent of G. Stresemann. These two clubs exerted an enormous influence on German policy during the war, indirectly controlling both the Press and the Reichstag. The "*Mittwochs-Gesell-*

*schaft*” met weekly at the Hotel Continental in Berlin. This was truly a case of sacred unity, for in addition to Count Westarp, leader of the nationalist Right, these meetings were also attended by such Social Democrats as Heine, Suedekum and David. Industry was represented by men of the calibre of Hugo Stinnes, Walter Rathenau, Dr Hugenberg, and others of similar calibre ; the Army, by General von Moltke and General von Kluck ; and political thought by Bassermann, Stresemann, Professor Hoetsch, and Georg Bernhard. The presence of the Social Democrats in this nationalist, militarist, and Big Business *milieu* indicates the degree of their political suppleness, which later caused the failure of the Revolution.

Already in 1915, Rathenau established close contact with Ludendorff, who in 1916 became the camouflaged dictator of Germany. Rathenau himself said :

“ I got to know Ludendorff in Kovno at the end of 1915. I felt that he was the man to lead us, if not to victory, at least to an honourable peace, and from that day on I was of those who did everything in their power to smooth his path to the Supreme Command ”

On September 16, 1916, Rathenau wrote a letter to Ludendorff advising him to deport to Germany 700,000 Belgian workers with a view to augmenting the industrial effort by the forced labour of these workers. “ We must win, we must,” he had written in one of his letters, and basing himself on this idea, he arrived at a solution which Hitler was to adopt on a much vaster scale, namely, that of putting the workers of the occupied countries on forced labour, thus compelling them to leave their families and work for the destruction of their own countries. Rathenau also supported the idea that the Belgian and French industrial regions should be annexed. (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 5, 1917.) During the war Rathenau was imbued with nationalism and lived in harmony with Ludendorff. But when Ludendorff asked that an armistice should be arranged, Rathenau disagreed with him and for the first time publicly opposed the Quartermaster-General. In an article entitled “The Black Day,” which he published in the *Vossische Zeitung* at the beginning of October, 1918, he declared himself against an armistice and demanded the continuation of the war. He advocated an intensification of the war effort through a *levée en masse*—thus appearing

to be "more Catholic than the Pope." This article helped to increase the hesitancy of the Government of Prince Max of Baden, who, on October 5, once again asked the General Staff whether it were not possible to avoid an armistice. However, the General Staff refused to follow Rathenau's advice, insisting on the absolute necessity of an armistice. Incidentally, Ludendorff's view was in accord with that of the War Minister, General von Scheuch.

After the outbreak of the November Revolution, Rathenau adapted himself to the circumstances and joined the Democratic Party, the successor of the former Progressive Party, one of whose leaders was the notorious theorist of *Mittleuropa*, Friedrich Naumann.<sup>1</sup> The Democratic Party was an apparently radical party, but was in fact profoundly nationalist—as might be gathered from the personality of Naumann. Naumann's idea, which he expounded in his *Mittleuropa*, a book published during the war, was to create a vast German economic Empire comprising Germany, Austria-Hungary, Poland, the Balkans and Asiatic Turkey. This ambitious plan was in accord with the views of Rathenau, so it is not surprising that Naumann and he should have met within the party that was to be one of the three pillars of the first Republican Governments. From the outset of his Republican career, Rathenau was confronted with violent hostility on the part of the Independents, who did not trust him. Even Wissell, the Social Democratic Minister of National Economy, accused Rathenau of wanting to make German industry into a single trust, a sort of gigantic A.E.G., with a view to mastering the working class movement. At all events, Rathenau on his part opposed the idea of State control of industry, which was dear to the heart of Wissell, just as he opposed the similar ideas of Kautsky, Hilferding, and Lederer.

During the famous debate concerning the signing of the Peace Treaty, on May 31, 1919, Rathenau published an article in the *Zukunft* ranging himself beside the implacable opponents of signature. He had not only general reasons, but also a personal one for taking this attitude: the French and Belgian Governments proposed to place him

on the list of war criminals, accusing him of being the instigator of the systematic destruction of the Belgian and French industries in the occupied regions, as well as of the deportation of Belgian workers to Germany. Signature of the Peace Treaty was bound to be associated in Rathenau's mind with his eventual trial by an Allied court. Actually, after the signing of the Peace Treaty his name was omitted from the list.

### *The Policy of Fulfilment*

After the Kapp putsch, Rathenau began to regain some of his political influence, thanks to his friendship with Dr Wirth, one of the leaders of the Centre and a member of the Fehrenbach Government. It was at this time that Rathenau's ideas concerning the Reich's new foreign policy became crystallized.

What we have said concerning the two tendencies among the corps of officers, would be true of any other German circle. The aim was the same—restoration of Germany's greatness. But there was a considerable divergence of opinion as regards the methods to be employed. The extremists were in favour of resistance to the death and open refusal to carry out the Peace Treaty. The moderates, those who were guided by reason rather than by emotion, considered that the all-important thing was to gain time. For this purpose it was necessary to lull the foreign world to sleep, renew friendships broken by the war, restore Germany's political position as a Great Power, and at the same time create a screen behind which German industry and the Reichswehr could re-build Germany's power. To achieve this aim it was necessary to create an atmosphere of confidence by making it appear as though the Treaty were being faithfully carried out. The policy of the moderates was called the policy of fulfilment. It was evolved by Walter Rathenau, and while he, a man who had always been accustomed to co-operation with foreign industries, represented this moderate tendency in the German business world, Hugo Stinnes and other Ruhr magnates, whose fortunes were based on national armaments, represented the diehard tendency. Thus in 1921-1922 there was a political struggle between Rathenau and Stinnes that bore

a striking resemblance to the struggle between Luettwitz and General von Seeckt.

In July, 1920, there was an inter-Allied Conference at Spa, to which the German Government was invited to send representatives. The German delegation was composed of Chancellor Fehrenbach, Dr Wirth, Dr Walter Simons, Minister of Foreign Affairs (later, from 1922, President of the Reich Supreme Court), General von Seeckt, and two representatives of industry—Hugo Stinnes and Walter Rathenau. At this time Stinnes was the most influential of the Ruhr magnates. And now, eighteen months after the Kaiser's abdication, the Reich's foreign policy no longer depended on the Socialists; it constituted the bone of contention in the struggle between the two tendencies of the leaders of German industry as personified by Hugo Stinnes and Walter Rathenau.

At the Spa Conference the Allies demanded priority for Reparations coal deliveries by Germany over German home consumption. The Germans were to supply two million tons of coal per month, and in case of refusal some German towns were to be occupied by way of sanctions. Hugo Stinnes was for rejection of the Allied demand, Rathenau for acceptance. The Reichswehr, through General von Seeckt, supported Rathenau's point of view! The Reichswehr had realized that in the situation in which Germany then found herself, it was necessary to proceed on Talleyrand's famous maxim, which he himself followed with success at the Congress of Vienna: "Once negotiations are possible, everything is possible."

Rathenau, with the support of General von Seeckt and Dr Wirth, prevailed, and the Allied demands were agreed to despite the opposition of Stinnes. "It was at that moment that the policy of fulfilment was born," observed Dr Wirth later. Germany had decided to seek a *rapprochement* with the Allies. Rathenau thought that this policy could be promoted by international collaboration between the big trusts, and he actually started conversations with M. Loucheur, one of the most influential men in France, concerning the creation of a single electrical trust for the whole of Europe.

However, *rapprochement* with the Allies did not exhaust Rathenau's program. He wanted, at the same

time, to reinsure in the direction of Soviet Russia, thereby definitely ending the isolation into which Germany had placed herself in 1914. The policy of conquest as reflected in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had broken down the day the German volunteer corps evacuated the Baltic countries. In the absence of other means, it was necessary to negotiate in the East, as in the West, in order to restore Germany's international position.

Immediately after the signing of the Versailles Treaty, Rathenau began to advocate political and economic *rapprochement* with Russia. "Understandings in the West and resumption of relations in the East thus became the two immediate aims of German foreign policy," wrote Count Harry Kessler, Rathenau's biographer,<sup>1</sup> "a policy which Dr Stresemann took up again and continued after Rathenau's death and after the collapse of passive resistance in the Ruhr. . . . The essence of this policy is the effort to counteract the work of Versailles and the destruction of Germany's military power by a policy of negotiation and understanding, with the aim of hastening the return of Germany to that place among the nations which corresponds to her moral, intellectual and economic resources." Through the political *détente*, Rathenau also wanted to create a favourable atmosphere for foreign credits, which were to enable Germany to strengthen her industrial effort—an indispensable condition for the re-building of her military power. Rathenau held that negotiation was Germany's most powerful weapon.

In January 1921, the Allied Supreme Council invited the Germans to a new conference on the modalities of Reparations payments. This conference met in London in March 1921. It produced no result, and on March 8, Duesseldorf, Duisburg and Ruhrort were occupied by the Allies by way of sanctions. The policy of fulfilment seemed to have failed owing to the ill-grace with which Germany was carrying out her Reparations obligations.

On April 27, 1921, the Allies fixed the total sum of Reparations at 132 billion marks gold, and on May 5, they demanded that Germany should accept their plan for Reparations payments, threatening to occupy the Ruhr Basin in case of refusal. This led to a Government crisis.

<sup>1</sup> *Walter Rathenau*, London, 1929, p 293

The Fehrenbach Government, unable to decide whether it was best to resist or accept the Allied demands, resigned in May 1921. The new Government was again based on the old Centre, Democrat and Socialist coalition, the Socialists replacing the People's Party. The post of Chancellor was taken by another Centre leader, Dr Wirth. Dr Simons was replaced at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by another former Imperial diplomat, F. von Rosen (Minister in Madrid). General Groener retained the Ministry of Communications. The Socialists were given—among other posts—the Vice-Chancellorship (Bauer), while W. Rathenau became Minister of Reconstruction.

The new Chancellor hastened to launch the slogan of the "two Germanys." In a conversation with Lord d'Abernon, the British Ambassador, on June 6, 1921, he said "that it was a great mistake on the part of the Allies to speak of their policy 'towards Germany.' There was not one Germany, but two Germanys."<sup>1</sup> This thesis of Dr Wirth's was being advanced during the second war by German emigrés. It is certain that it will be advanced every time Germany feels weaker than her adversaries.

The one Germany, that of William II and Hitler, is universally known as the incarnation of militarism. One might think that the other Germany, by contrast, is profoundly pacific. But here is what Dr Wirth himself thought:

"I am a pacifist. But in the course of the last few years I have had the opportunity, here in this difficult post, to engage in politics, and I have made the experience that it is not possible to carry on politics for the German people with pacifism" (Reichstag speech, December 17, 1926.)

The new Government, under Rathenau's influence, chose the policy of fulfilment of the Versailles Treaty. "I consider my task to consist in smoothing the way for my successors," wrote Rathenau at this time. "The first two or three people can only point out the road; the fourth will build it. But a start must be made somewhere." He had no idea that the "fourth" would be Adolf Hitler.

On June 2, 1921, Rathenau defended his policy before the Reichstag: "I have entered a Cabinet of fulfilment.

We must discover some means of linking ourselves up with the world again."

On October 6, 1921, at Wiesbaden, Rathenau succeeded in concluding an agreement with Loucheur, representing France, under which Reparations payments in gold were to be replaced by payments in kind. In Rathenau's view, this agreement was bound to stimulate German production and exports to France for a time, and when French industry felt menaced by the deliveries in kind, the plan would demonstrate to the world that in practice Reparations were an impossibility. This calculation turned out to be partly correct, for in the course of 1922 French industry did everything in its power to limit deliveries in kind. On October 20, 1921, a fortnight after the signing of the Wiesbaden agreement, the Council of the League of Nations partitioned Upper Silesia between Poland and Germany on the basis of the votes cast in the plebiscite in favour of either country. Partition of the province aroused a storm in Germany, and the Democrats, by way of protest, retired from the Government. Thus Rathenau ceased to be a Minister.

The new Government was formed by the same Chancellor, Dr Wirth, who also took the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. Bauer remained as Vice-Chancellor, while the other Ministers, except for General Groener, were Centrists or Socialists.

Fresh Reparations difficulties obliged the Government to make use of Rathenau again. He became the leader of the German delegations sent, in turn, to London (December 1921) to negotiate with the British Government, and to Cannes (January 1922) for talks with all the principal Allies. This was the beginning of the duel between Rathenau and Poincaré, who profoundly distrusted Germany. After the Cannes Conference Rathenau rejoined the Government, being given the portfolio of Foreign Affairs on January 31, 1922.

### *The Treaty of Rapallo*

In his new post Rathenau was free to pursue his policy. He tried to profit from the disagreement between the heads of two Allied Governments, Lloyd George, and



Poincaré, to weaken Allied solidarity, playing them out against each other. He maintained relations with certain Frenchmen, as Loucheur, in order to fight Poincaré in his own country. At the same time, he also endeavoured to carry out his plan of *rapprochement* with Russia.

The international conference convoked at Genoa in April, 1922, became an arena for Rathenau. Both Germany and Russia were represented. Rathenau helped to aggravate the conflicts between the British and French delegations, and at the same time exploited their blundering treatment of the Russian delegation to anticipate the Allies and be the first to make advances to Russia. Both the British and French Governments intended to resume relations with Russia and even invite her to join the Allies as regards Reparations, but the disagreements between them caused them to lose precious time, while facilitating Rathenau's game. Thus on April 16, Rathenau paid a very secret visit to Rapallo, near Genoa, and there concluded with Tchitcherin, the Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the famous agreement whereby the two countries resumed relations and abandoned their mutual financial claims. Rathenau alone, of all the participants in the Conference of Genoa, managed to make friends with Russia, thereby reverting to the traditional Bismarckian policy. Germany's position was enormously strengthened by this reinsurance in the East, and she was now able to confront the Allies, who were divided by their internal disputes, with greater confidence.

The Treaty of Rapallo was of capital importance to the Reichswehr, which was enabled by the *rapprochement* with Russia to enter into military collaboration with her with a view to facilitating Germany's secret rearmament.

Another aim of the Treaty of Rapallo was the encirclement of Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Rathenau had thus scored a great diplomatic success, in striking contrast with the weakened position of Britain and France, who had failed to bring about a *rapprochement* with Russia and left Genoa in a state of disagreement among themselves.

The signing of the Treaty of Rapallo was in crass contrast with Germany's assurances to the Western diplomats and financiers that she was going to be the bulwark

of the Western world against the Communist "danger." She had given these assurances repeatedly since the signing of the Peace Treaty. On October 22, 1920, Dr Simons, the German Foreign Minister, in an endeavour to justify the maintenance of the various semi-military organizations like the *Einwohnerwehr*, or the terrorist "Orgesch" organization, explained to Lord d'Abernon, the British Ambassador, that they were indispensable to ward off the Communist peril in Germany, adding that, "Germany was in reality the barrier against Bolshevism and disorder."<sup>1</sup> Despite these declarations, Germany in 1921 started negotiations with the Soviet Union, which she was then denouncing as a "peril" to the representatives of the Western world. During 1921 and 1922 different Soviet delegates, as Radek, Rakowsky, Krassin, etc., had conversations not only with the German Government, but also with the big German trusts, as those of Krupp, Stinnes, and the A.E.G. (the electrical trust directed by Rathenau). These contacts indicated that the two countries had already begun collaboration as regards war industries. Von Maltzan, head of the Russian Department in the Reich Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Brockdorff-Rantzau, German Ambassador in Moscow and Foreign Minister of the period of the Peace Conference, each contributed to the task of making the relations between the two countries closer.

After the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo, which was a surprise to the British Government, the Germans found themselves in a rather delicate situation as regards Great Britain. On the one hand, they wanted to foster good relations with Britain, while on the other they had played a stroke against her that was all the more disagreeable because Mr Lloyd George, the then Prime Minister, was genuinely anxious to bring about a *rapprochement* with Russia and had been anticipated by the German-Russian treaty. To escape from the dilemma, the Germans pretended that the Treaty of Rapallo had been improvised on the spot within twenty-four hours, and that they had had no time to inform the British. The truth was rather different. Maltzan himself, on October 20, 1926, admitted to Lord d'Abernon that "The Treaty (of Rapallo) had

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. I., p. 78.

been practically agreed to with the Russians as far as regards wording as early as Christmas, 1921."<sup>1</sup>

Von Maltzan, the principal author of the Treaty of Rapallo, was rewarded some months later: on December 23, 1922, he was promoted State Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On May 22, 1922, *The Times* interpreted the sentiments of the German industrialists as regards the Treaty of Rapallo thus: "The industrialists do not seem to like Rapallo better than other classes. They are not more eager than non-German capitalists to give credit in money or in goods to fraudulent bankrupts."

But seven months later, on December 11, *The Times* had a different tale to tell:

"At a meeting of the Foreign Committee of the Reichstag on Saturday (9th) which was presided over by Herr Stresemann, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr von Rosenberg made a statement on the relations between Germany and Soviet Russia. Referring to the recent extension of the Rapallo Treaty to include the minor Soviet Republics, he declared that it had not been found possible to settle this question earlier chiefly in view of the opposition of the Social Democrats and also because the Government had deemed it necessary to ascertain the attitude of the Allies in the matter. The Social Democrats had recently withdrawn their opposition and it had been understood that the Allied Governments had no objection to raise.

"Baron von Maltzan, the Head of the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave some particulars of progress made since the signing of the Treaty. Both sides were working actively to put the agreement into practice. Besides the agreement with the Otto Wolff Syndicate, the Soviet Government had recently signed agreements with the Stinnes Group and with Krupps. Twenty other agreements had been signed.

"Spokesmen of the German People's Party and the German National Party expressed their approval of the Government's policy towards Soviet Russia."

It is interesting to note that the parties of the Right—the German Nationals and the People's Party—were in favour of the policy of *rapprochement* with Russia, and that the hesitancy was on the Socialist side. The Socialists found it difficult to reconcile themselves to the idea of collaboration with Moscow, the Mecca of their enemies and rivals, the German Communists. The Right, on the other hand, frankly ignored internal considerations, and thought

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. I., p. 319.

only of making military collaboration with the Soviet Union closer, and of using the Russian ace card in the diplomatic game with the Western countries.

In 1926, when the new Treaty with Russia came up for discussion, all parties were unanimous in approving of the pro-Soviet policy.

According to Mme. Antonina Valentin, an intimate friend of Stresemann's (*Stresemann*, London, 1931, p. 206):

"In the days when Germany in something like a panic had concluded the Treaty of Rapallo, the German Government also gave a verbal pledge that they would not enter the League without Russia. In the prolonged negotiations with Russia that preceded the signature of the Treaty of Locarno, the Russian representatives called attention to this promise by Germany and they did their utmost to dissuade Germany from signing the Treaty of Locarno."

According to the same author, Stresemann, in order to reassure the Russians and maintain the friendship with the Soviet Union, promised even while negotiating the Treaty of Locarno that "the Rapallo Treaty would be confirmed and its scope extended immediately after Germany's admission to the League of Nations." This promise was implemented in 1926.

### *Murder of Rathenau*

After his return to Germany, Rathenau fell a victim to the agitation of the fanatical nationalists, who failed to grasp the subtleties of his foreign policy. Karl Helfferich, whose virulent attacks against Erzberger had on April 26, 1921, led to the assassination of the latter, now directed his fury against Rathenau. One of the secret organization—"Consul"—undertook to assassinate Rathenau—such was the effect of Helfferich's insensate agitation.

On June 23, 1922, in the Reichstag, Helfferich made one of his impassioned speeches against Rathenau. The following day Rathenau was assassinated by some young men entrusted with this task by the "Consul" organization. The assassins committed suicide in the course of their pursuit by the police and thus escaped being brought to justice.

The murders of Erzberger and Rathenau were tragic paradoxes. Both men wanted to re-build Germany's power, had proved during the war that they were second to none

in nationalist faith, and had done their best to choose the most suitable way, in the given circumstances, of saving their country from the consequences of the defeat. They were assassinated by fanatics on account of a difference of opinion as regards method. For the division between them and their assassins concerned not the final aim, but the means of achieving it. A tragic error. As late as the evening of June 23, Rathenau had met Stinnes, one of his principal adversaries, at the house of Mr Houghton, the American Ambassador, in Berlin. The two had a lively political discussion and the Ambassador "got the impression that the two were not so far apart, politically speaking, as was commonly supposed." This impression was correct: the divergence related only to method. Stinnes was no further apart from Rathenau than Luettwitz had been from von Seeckt.<sup>1</sup>

After Rathenau's death, Chancellor Dr Wirth himself took over the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. But his Government did not long survive Rathenau. It resigned on November 14, 1922. This political crisis was accompanied by a change in the Centre Party, where the more reactionary elements gained the upper hand. The Centre was becoming more and more the organ of the landowners and high officials. The Christian trade unions linked with the Centre were also evolving, under the leadership of Stegerwald, towards the Right, losing contact with the Socialists; they were increasingly attracted to the idea that the welfare of the workers did not necessarily depend on a democratic régime and could be ensured even under a dictatorship. This political evolution of the Centre and the Christian trade unions ultimately led to the Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher régimes and marked the end of the Weimar coalition. The Socialists, despite their constant opportunism, from then on found themselves increasingly isolated.

However, this did not prevent them from continuing to think in terms of "Deutschland über Alles." On August 11, 1922, on the third anniversary of the Republican Con-

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Daniels, *The Rise of the German Republic*, p. 192.

"The least explicable part of the crime was that Rathenau should have been selected as the victim. His war record in speech and action was as ruthless as that of the most irreconcilable Junker, and judged by German standards, it might have been thought that he deserved well of his country."

stitution, Scheidemann, upon learning that certain Socialists would prefer to replace "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles" by another National Anthem, was so indignant that he hastened to publish an article entitled *Germany above Everything*, in which he wrote :

"So long as the millions of the working class are labouring with political insight, to make the Republic secure, they will go on making the greatest sacrifices from pure love of country, set Germany on her feet again and bring her respect and honour. Now, when the Reich is in dire straits, we will stand by it with unshakable loyalty and devotion. None can have a better right to this Song of the Germans than the working masses, who are Democrats and Republicans. If therefore the workers on August 11, the birthday of the free German Constitution sing 'Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles, Ueber Alles in der Welt' . . . everyone will know what it means."<sup>1</sup>

This article, as Scheidemann himself admitted, provoked some criticism, one of which is worth quoting :

" . . . In a leading article which I have kept out of our paper you go so far as to think the Song of the Germans suitable for Constitution Day. I have unfortunately been often forced to notice that you are no longer capable of interpreting the spirit of the masses. As the song, 'Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles' has been sung not only in recent years, but also directly after our collapse in the war by Nationalists and the German People's Party, it has been more and more boycotted in our own ranks ; just as the Black-White-Red is now an emblem for the enemies of the Republic, so is the Song of the Germans regarded by us as a challenge to the Republic. I therefore regret your article, and hope it will not be reprinted in any paper."<sup>2</sup>

But Scheidemann adds that his article was reprinted in several Socialist journals. His colleague, Ebert, on August 11, 1924, officially recognised "Deutschland über Alles" as the official Anthem of the Republic. Scheidemann wrote in his memoirs in this connection :

"The fact that he (Ebert) made the Song of the Germans the National Anthem is a proof at any rate of our thinking the same on this subject. 'Germany before everything.' Alas ! the purblind of yesterday and the day before will never comprehend or understand that these Social Democrats, who were abused by the last Hohenzollern Emperor as fellows without a country, and branded by Imperialistic judges in Republican times as traitors to their land, can love their Fatherland from their hearts—before everything in the world."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Philip Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, London, 1929, Vol. II., pp. 674-675.

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit.*, Vol. II., p. 675

*Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 675-676.

*No Wars of Aggression—until Germany has the Means*

We shall conclude the story of 1922 with the following extract from a statement made in the Reichstag on May 10, 1922, by the Reichswehr Minister, Dr Gessler who, speaking about a note from General Nollet, Chairman of the Inter-Allied Military Commission, said :

" . . . Now General Nollet has objected, in a Note, to the training regulations for the artillery I am convinced that when the sense of these regulations is made clear to the quarters concerned, things will be viewed in a different light. For these regulations are nothing but an expression of that which the Reichstag wants, namely, that the training should serve not the purposes of parades, but only the requirements of battle. Wars of aggression are not mentioned in them. Our Army men are far too intelligent to want to undertake a war of aggression with the means we have at our disposal. It is not clear how such an idea could have arisen at all on the opposite side."

Thus Dr Gessler, with disarming frankness, declared that the Reichswehr was training for war, not for parades, but that it would not think of a war of aggression so long as it lacked adequate means. Those means were available in 1939.

But when, in 1928, Dr Gessler resigned in favour of General Groener, he could say with satisfaction, in his farewell message to the Reichswehr on January 21, that the difficulties had been surmounted and that the Army and Navy were once more fit for use :

" For nearly eight years I have had the honour of being at the head of the Reichswehr Ministry ; they have been difficult years ; for it was during them that German disarmament in accordance with the Versailles Treaty has had to be carried out. However, we have also been able to build up and to lay the legal and organisational foundations of the young German defence force. Germany's Army and Navy are again usable and respected both at home and abroad."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INFLATION—THE RUHR— CONFLICT BETWEEN THE REICH GOVERNMENT AND SAXONY AND BAVARIA

#### *Inflation Stimulates Nationalism and Brings Profits to German Capitalists*

THE years 1921-1922-1923 were marked by unlimited inflation. Here is the scale of the mark-dollar rate :

October 1,	1918	...	...	...	4.00
January 2,	1921	...	...	...	74.40
July 1,	1921	...	...	...	75.00
January 2,	1922	...	...	...	186.75
July 1,	1922	...	...	...	401.49
January 2,	1923	...	...	...	7,260.00
July 1,	1923	...	...	...	160,000.00
August 1,	1923	...	...	...	1,100,000.00
September 4,	1923	...	...	...	13,000,000.00
October 1,	1923	...	...	...	242,000,000.00
November 1,	1923	...	...	...	130,000,000,000.00
November 30,	1923	...	...	...	4,200,000,000,000.00

The value of the mark fell with staggering rapidity. Why did the successive Governments fail to stabilise it? On account of the burden of Reparations, replied German propaganda, both at home and abroad. The argument was well chosen, for it diverted the attention of the masses, driving them into a xenophobe nationalism. Yet at the end of 1923 the mark was stabilised, despite Reparations. The reason for the earlier failure to do so was very different. The industrialists and junkers had been pressing the Government to continue with the inflation. To the industrialists the inflation meant enormous credits, which were easily granted to them by the State, but which were immediately cancelled through the devaluation of the mark. Thanks to the inflation, the big industrialists were able to develop their undertakings and increase their fortunes with incredible rapidity. Stinnes was one of those who accumulated a fabulous fortune in this manner. To the



junkers inflation meant the cancellation of their mortgage debts. On the other hand, the workers' real wages were continually falling, for the nominal increases could never keep pace with the rhythm of the inflation. To the middle classes the inflation meant the loss of their savings. In other words, the inflation was an easy means for the industrialists and junkers to enrich themselves at the expense of the workers and middle classes, while directing the hatred of the dispossessed against foreign countries. It was an excellent mechanism to reduce the working masses to destitution, to subject them to shameless exploitation, and at the same time create an atmosphere of rabid nationalism. The inflation was in full swing during the Ruhr crisis.

The Imperial German Government during the war had been confronted with the same problem as the other belligerents, namely, how to cover the immense expenditure involved in the conduct of the war. It could have resorted to taxation, but this remedy would have been extremely disagreeable to the industrialists and junkers. It therefore decided to adopt what was for the time being an easier method—internal loans. It did so in the firm hope that at the end of the war a victorious Germany would be in a position to shift the burden of the cost of the war by extorting a fantastic indemnity.

On March 10, 1915, in the Reichstag, Dr Helfferich, former Governor of the Deutsche Bank, and Reich State Secretary of Finance during the war, said :

"After the war we shall not be able to forego—and we have not the slightest intention of foregoing—our claim that our enemies shall make restitution for all the material damage, quite apart from any other loss they have caused us by the irresponsible launching of this war against us."

Some months later the German Government received a memorandum signed by 182 industrialists, bankers and business men, 352 professors, 145 high officials and 18 generals and admirals—all well-known men. And this is how "Germany's *élite*" interpreted Dr Helfferich's program :

"We must ruthlessly impose a heavy war indemnity on France. . . . And should we be in a position to impose an indemnity on England, no sum would be too great."

However, these beautiful dreams were not realized, and a defeated Germany found herself confronted with an immense load of internal debt. On March 31, 1914, the German national debt amounted to 5,000 million marks. At the beginning of 1919 it was 170,000 million marks. Republican Germany could also have resorted to taxation, but, like Imperial Germany, it was up against the opposition of the wealthy classes. It therefore decided to liquidate the internal debt by means of . . . inflation.

The result was magnificent for the possessing classes. They completely escaped the danger of having to pay huge taxes to liquidate the financial consequences of the war, though they had been its chief instigators. After the stabilisation of the mark, that is, on March 1, 1924, the national debt amounted to only 1,958 million marks. Who paid the cost of this operation? Chiefly the middle classes and the peasant and working masses who had bought Government bonds during the war. They were simply robbed.

Thanks to this magical operation of the Government and the Reichbank, the land debt was devalued no less speedily. At the end of 1913 it amounted to 11,000 million marks; by the end of 1923 it had fallen to 39.9 millions. It had been almost entirely liquidated, principally to the benefit of the junkers and other landowners. The reverse side of the medal is not difficult to guess: at the end of 1913 savings amounted to 31,079.7 million marks; in 1924 they had fallen to 595.3 million marks. The savers had been robbed of 30,000 million marks gold.

The inflation enabled the Reichbank to grant huge credits to the industrialists. The latter used the money partly to re-organize and develop their works, and partly to purchase foreign securities, thereby contributing to the further depreciation of the mark. *Der Wirtschaftsdienst*, a German economic journal, calculated that during the inflation period Germans had purchased foreign securities for a total of 10,000 million marks gold. In parenthesis, this sum, transferred during the inflation period by rich Germans for private gain, is twice the amount transferred in cash by Germany towards Reparations during the entire period. Reparations were paid at all. These colossal transfers of money were effected by an extremely simple

method, as illustrated by the famous operation of a certain big business man, who borrowed from the Reichbank, in marks, a sum equivalent at the prevailing rate of exchange to 200,000 dollars, immediately purchased foreign securities, and a few weeks later repaid his debt to the Reichbank in depreciated paper marks, netting nearly a million marks gold on the difference between the rates of exchange. Hugo Stinnes, the "inflexible patriot," and other industrial barons carried out similar operations on a grand scale, buying up many undertakings in all parts of the world with the aid of Reichsbank credits.<sup>1</sup> Dr Schacht, who at the end of 1923 became Governor of the Reichsbank, himself did not shrink from buying a villa from an officer's widow with depreciated marks, then refusing to add anything to the nominal purchase price.

Nevertheless, when in 1924, the *Journal des Débats* expressed doubts concerning the allegations that the Germans were unable to pay Reparations for lack of sufficient foreign exchange, stating "that on the contrary, German industrialists like Stinnes, Thyssen and others own in both hemispheres land, businesses and shareholdings whose total value amounts to a staggering figure," Stresemann, without batting an eyelid, publicly protested against this "fairy tale of German milliards abroad."<sup>2</sup>

However, this "malicious" legend was true, though the truth was well camouflaged. Germany's foreign investments, which before 1914 were estimated at 26 billion marks gold, had been only partially liquidated by the Allies after the war. The greater part had been saved, thanks to a

<sup>1</sup> The following statement of a German expert, Richard Loewensohn, indicates the extent of the penetration of German capital abroad :

"According to the estimate of Paul Ufermann the foreign assets and participations of Hugo Stinnes, shortly before his death, were distributed among various branches of 572 concerns. 35 in Czechoslovakia, 89 in German-Austria, 29 in Hungary, 47 in the Balkan States, 19 in Russia, 41 in Poland and Danzig, 14 in the neighbouring north-easterly States, 43 in Scandinavia, 12 in England, 31 in Holland, 17 in Belgium and Luxemburg, 20 in France, 3 in Spain, 8 in Portugal, 31 in Italy, 17 in Switzerland, 7 in North-America, 48 in Central and South America, 4 in Japan, 5 in China, 10 in the Islands of the Indian Ocean and the South Sea Islands, 8 in Asia Minor and Persia, and 6 in Africa."

(*Die Umschichtung der Europaischen Vermoegen* (Redistribution of European Fortunes, Berlin, 1925, pp. 92-93.)

Paul Ufermann, Loewensohn's authority for the above, is another German expert and author of an excellent monograph, *Der Deutsche Stahltrust* (The German Steel Trust).

<sup>2</sup> *Gustav Stresemann. His diaries, letters and papers*, Macmillan, London, 1935, Vol. I., p. 309.

cunning and complicated system of trusts and holding companies masking German influence in countless foreign industrial undertakings. This influence only increased after the war. As stated above, during the inflation period alone, German industrialists had transferred abroad 10 billion marks gold, investing this colossal sum in foreign undertakings. Stinnes alone held shares or debentures in 572 foreign undertakings which were largely under his financial control.

The inflation brought a triple gain to the industrialists: credits *à fonds perdus* from the Reichsbank, ludicrously low wages for their workers, and considerably increased exports to foreign countries. German production costs were very low, because the workers were ill-paid and the industrialists could dip deeply into the coffers of the Reichsbank. In the circumstances German goods could be sold abroad at prices with which the industries of other countries were unable to compete.

The dishonest enrichment of the industrialists, bankers and business men through unlimited Reichsbank credits had its counterpart in the impoverishment of the working class. During the second half of 1923, that is, at the height of the inflation, the real value of workers' wages fell to a disastrously low level. Here is a comparative table of real wages per hour:

	July 1914.	September 1923.
Metalworkers ...	0.70 mk.	0.17 mk.
Masons ... ..	0.84 „	0.21 „
Printers ... ..	0.65 „	0.22 „
Garment workers	0.70 „	0.14 „

The profit and loss account was clear: on the "Profits" side there was the cancellation of the junkers' debts and the enrichment of the industrialists, big business men and bankers; and on the "Losses" side, the ruin of the middle classes and the destitution of the workers. Such were the social repercussions of the inflation, which had been deliberately engineered by the Reichsbank and the Government with the connivance of the possessing classes. To this must be added on the "Profits" side cancellation of the national debt, and on the "Losses" side the 7,000 million marks lost by foreigners on German securities whose value was reduced to nil by the inflation. Indeed, Lord

Keynes estimates that foreign losses between 1919 and 1923 amounted to 8,000 million marks gold.

As a result of this marvellous operation, Germany in 1923 rid herself of her internal debt, while Britain was left with an internal debt of £7,500,000,000, and France with one of £6,400,000,000. In addition, Britain and France owed to the United States war debts amounting, with interest, respectively to 11,105,965,000 and 6,847,674,000 dollars.

*Cuno Government Abandons "Policy of Fulfilment"*

On November 22, 1922, after the resignation of the Wirth Government, the new Chancellor, Dr Cuno, formed a Government oriented towards the Right. The Ministers belonged to the People's Party (*e.g.*, Heinze, the Vice-Chancellor), the Centre (*e.g.*, Hermes, the Minister of Finance, and Brauns, Minister of Labour), the Democratic Party (*e.g.*, Dr Gessler, the Reichswehr Minister), or were non-party, as the Chancellor himself, also Rosenberg, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was a former Imperial diplomat, General Groener, the Minister of Communications, and Dr Luther, Mayor of Essen, the Minister of Agriculture ; but they all had Conservative tendencies. The Chancellor was Director of the Hamburg-Amerika Line. First among German industrialists to enter into relations with foreign capital after the war, he had in 1920 made an agreement with an American company which from then on helped the Hamburg-Amerika Line to re-build its merchant fleet. Cuno's example was soon followed by many others. It was thus that German industry re-tied the threads broken by the war.

Here is Lord d'Abernon's impression of the new Foreign Minister who, as an Imperial diplomat, had played a prominent part in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations :

"What he detests are Poles and Czechs and all minor nationalities. This attitude is not unusual here. The two things Rosenberg is proud of are having lost three brothers in the war and being 'the man of Brest-Litovsk.' It is rather strange to hear anybody speak with pride of a part at Brest-Litovsk, a negotiation which moralists and strategists alike condemn ; but he constantly returns to it as a legitimate title to glory."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. II., pp. 153-4.

Of course, the German National Party supported the Government, which was of such Conservative tendencies and composition that it might well have been in office under William II.

Whereas the Wirth Government, under Rathenau's influence, wanted to pursue a policy of fulfilment, the Cuno Government took a contrary attitude, intending to sabotage Reparations payments. Organization of resistance to the Allies was the new Government's *raison d'être*. Although the Government was of a distinctly capitalist composition, the nationalist virus had penetrated Germany's organism so deeply that her entire public opinion rallied to it. The Government was supported not only by all the bourgeois parties in the Reichstag, from the Democrats to the German Nationals, but even by the Social Democrats. The Communists alone remained in opposition.

On January 13, 1923, a vote of confidence in the Government was passed by all the parties against the votes of the Communists and some dissidents, as Ledebour. H. Mueller, a future Chancellor, speaking on behalf of the Socialists, expressed confidence in the new Government. The political atmosphere greatly resembled that of August 1914, when all opposition had vanished and the parties ranged themselves solidly behind the Imperial Government.

*Disagreement between the Allies—  
Occupation of the Ruhr and Passive Resistance*

Meanwhile, the Allies were engaged in a fierce dispute, failing to form a united front. In the first half of December, 1922, an inter-Allied conference was held in London with a view to smoothing out differences of opinion on Reparations, but the conference produced no result. On December 27, the Reparations Commission found by a majority of votes, the British delegate abstaining, that Germany had defaulted on deliveries in kind. A fresh inter-Allied conference, held in Paris in January 1923, again revealed profound disagreement. It was then that the French Government, seconded by the Belgian Government, but against the views of the British and Italian Governments, decided to act alone. France and Belgium, who had

suffered most during the war and consequently had the greatest interest in Reparations, dissociated themselves from their Allies. Thus the Allies were in open disagreement in the face of a strongly united Germany—an astonishing spectacle. On January 10, 1923, the French Government notified the Reich of its intention of sending troops to the Ruhr Basin in order to ensure deliveries in kind and make good Germany's defaults. On January 11, Belgian and French troops began the occupation of the Ruhr area.

The German Government replied by proclaiming passive resistance, which was to consist not only in non-co-operation with the occupying authorities, but also in a complete stoppage of production. For the first time since the Armistice, Germany had decided to pursue the path proposed by the fanatics and place herself into open opposition with the Allies.

However, despite the "holy alliance" of the German political parties, and despite Socialist mobilisation of the Ruhr workers and organized acts of sabotage by the patriotic associations (volunteer corps), the campaign of passive resistance collapsed, thus confirming the thesis of those who had counselled patience and preferred to whittle down the Versailles Treaty through negotiations. The failure of passive resistance cleared the way for Gustav Stresemann, who later carried out the policy of Walter Rathenau.

This failure was due to a number of reasons. The French and Belgians succeeded in organizing the administration of the Ruhr by such means as, for instance, getting French and Belgian railwaymen to run the railways. Also, the Ruhr magnates, though first in exciting nationalism in their country, were not "last-ditch" patriots themselves. Faced with the prospect of heavy losses if the coal mines were closed down, they prevented a general strike and went on working the mines, at least partially. The reason they gave was the need to produce coal for the inhabitants of the Ruhr and for the local industries. Besides, they also wanted to accumulate reserves for the rest of Germany, in case the occupation authorities raised the ban they had imposed on such deliveries. In theory, the coal was not being produced for France and Belgium. But in practice

a considerable portion of the production was seized by the occupation authorities for Reparations. The process was as follows :

“ The scene is any pit in the Ruhr district. The miners peacefully work the coal and pile it at the pit mouth. One day French troops appear at the mine. The German miners and labourers indignantly leave the spot. The French remain there, and with great difficulty and the assistance of foreign labourers whom they have brought with them, they clear the coal from the pithead. This done, they move off again. Immediately the German workers and officials reappear and carry on the work in the mine, until once more coal is piled up, and the French come back again. And so it goes on. The whole procedure was known as—national passive resistance ”<sup>1</sup>

The quantities of coal thus seized by the French increased each month.

Meanwhile, inflation in Germany continued in full swing, allegedly to provide the means for the passive resistance. The same Ruhr industrialists who were in practice sabotaging resistance, drew large amounts from the Government under the pretext of compensation for losses incurred through resistance. Even after resistance had ceased, the Government granted the Ruhr industrialists subsidies totalling a billion marks, still by way of compensation. Passive resistance had been good business for these industrialists.

At all events, the French Government, though it had difficulties owing to the hostile attitude of the Ruhr population, achieved its aim by helping itself to the coal on the spot.

### *Centrifugal Tendencies in Germany*

Another reason for the failure of passive resistance was the political uncertainty prevailing in Germany at this time. The people had been inflamed by nationalist agitation, and the extremists thought they could exploit this to overthrow the Republic. On the other hand, the inflation, which was sapping the foundations of social stability, had produced profound discontent among the working masses and they seemed to be awakening once more from their somnolence.

<sup>1</sup> A. Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, pp. 181-2.



As the affairs of the Reich were going badly, separatist tendencies began to appear.<sup>1</sup> A separatist movement in the Rhineland, led by a Dr Dorten, aimed at detaching this territory from the Reich. This movement, though supported by the French occupation authorities, failed, and its leaders were massacred by the nationalists, nationalist agents being sent for the purpose from the interior of the Reich. For example, on February 12, 1923, about thirty separatists were surrounded in the Town Hall of Pirmasens, which was then set on fire by the nationalists. The separatists all perished in the flames. These separatist tendencies caused profound disquiet in Berlin, as witness, for example, the account of a meeting that took place at the Reich Chancellery on January 9, 1924, between Chancellor Marx, Stresemann, Luther and representatives of the occupied territories, including Stinnes, Voegler and Adenauer, Lord Mayor of Cologne. The Rhineland representatives declared quite plainly that unless Germany succeeded in coming to an agreement with France without delay, the Reich would probably disintegrate and, in any case, the occupied territories would detach themselves from Germany; that, therefore, Germany must try to bring about an understanding with France, even at a high cost; that separatism was not finished, but was on the contrary again beginning to manifest itself; and that the creation of a Western State within the framework of the Reich would be admissible if it led to a complete restoration of relations between France and Germany.<sup>2</sup> It will be noted that even Hugo Stinnes had a moment of weakness. He, the fanatical nationalist, who had always opposed the policy of fulfilment, at one time declared that he was thinking of the creation of an "economic Duchy of the Ruhr" and of negotiating with France direct as to the fate of the Rhineland-Westphalian region. On August 23, 1923, Otto Wolff,

<sup>1</sup> Already in 1918 when the prestige of the German Reich was very low, a separatist trend appeared in Western Germany. On December 4, 1918, two meetings of the Centre held at Cologne, passed resolutions favourable to the proclamation of an independent Rhenisch Westphalian Republic "because the Rhine provinces and Westphalia possessed sufficient political, cultural and economic power to form a state." This independent Republic should form a part of the German Reich. The speakers at those meetings were no insignificant nonentities; they were the old leader of the Centre—Trimborn, and the future Chancellor of the Reich—Dr Wilhelm Marx. (Leopold Schwarzschild, *World in a Trance*, London, 1943, pp. 80-81.)

<sup>2</sup> *Les papiers de Stresemann* (French translation), Vol. I, p. 168.

a big Cologne industrialist, told Stresemann that the atmosphere in the Rhineland was very bad.

"He had the impression that the Separatist movement had made tremendous strides. He had a feeling that there would be support for the foundation of a Rhine State, which would include a section of the Ruhr, because the Rhinelanders were too weak."<sup>1</sup>

Baron von Rheinbaben, one of Stresemann's biographers, writes:

"A number of men of rank and position in the Rhineland disguised their plans for a separate Rhinish State under the excuse that they did not wish to detach themselves permanently from the Reich, but felt obliged to set up a Rhinish State as a temporary measure, in order subsequently to start a curative process from without. The development initiated by Stresemann confounded the plans of these persons, but for the time being they constituted a grave danger"<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Stresemann himself, in a letter he sent to Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, on October 13, 1923, admitted that "Never was the unity of the Reich so seriously threatened as at present."<sup>3</sup> In his reply, dated November 6, the Cardinal suggested that the Weimar Constitution should be changed in a federalist sense, adding that the Bavarian people, who had remained loyal to their King, had the right to decide their own fate.<sup>4</sup> The Cardinal was alluding to a political movement with a separatist trend that was evolving in Bavaria, where the cry "Los von Berlin" had again become popular.

Leading Reich circles had at last grasped that the struggle against France, while yielding no practical results in the Ruhr, was calculated to undermine the Reich's political and social foundations.

*Stresemann becomes Chancellor with the Support  
of Stinnes and the Socialists*

The policy of resistance having failed, the Cuno Government resigned on August 12, 1923. Cuno's successor was Stresemann, a member of the People's Party, which at the proclamation of the Republic had taken the place of the

<sup>1</sup> *Stresemann: His Diaries*, Vol. I., pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> *Stresemann*, by Baron von Rheinbaben, 1928, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Stresemann: His Diaries*, Vol. I., p. 127

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 129.

then National Liberal Party. The People's Party represented the interests of industry and the banks. The new Chancellor had the powerful support of Stinnes, who did everything possible to raise him to power. When Stresemann appeared before the Reichstag as Chancellor, the Communists greeted him with cries of "Stinnes's representative! Stinnes's screen!"<sup>1</sup>

All this did not prevent the Socialists from supporting the new Chancellor, as they had supported Dr Cuno until the day before his resignation.

Stresemann paid retrospective tribute to the Socialists in an article he published on March 2, 1924: "Even General Ludendorff would know that on all occasions when an appeal is made to the people, an appeal that concerns the vital interests of this land, the 'Socialist Marxists' feel and vote as Germans."<sup>2</sup> Anyone taking the trouble to follow the policy of the German Socialists during the world war, and also after the November Revolution, will find that this was only too true.

When Stresemann was appointed to succeed Dr Cuno, he invited the Socialists to join the Government. Of course, he was not impelled by any particular sympathy for the Socialists, for, being himself a business man, he detested them. He was merely acting in accordance with his opportunist attitude to the Socialists, which he had expressed already on January 23, 1920, as leader of the People's Party:

"The task before us seems to me to consist in first breaking the overwhelming influence of Social Democracy and reducing it to a more

<sup>1</sup> The patron of the German People's Party and of its leader, G. Stresemann, Hugo Stinnes, was jointly with Walter Rathenau the chief instigator of the deportation of Belgian workers to Germany. Erzberger, explaining to the Reichstag on February 18, 1919, the dismissal of H. Stinnes from the post of an expert with the German delegation to the Inter-allied Armistice Commission, said:

"Against my will, and without consulting me, Hugo Stinnes was sent to Spa as one of our experts. I protested against this at once and secured the gentleman's withdrawal. I justify my action on the following grounds: I cannot use on the commission a man who played such a prominent part in the clearing out of Belgium as Hugo Stinnes did. I cannot present the French and the Belgians with an expert who for two or three years strove in numerous conversations with the Supreme Command to secure the exploitation of the Campine and similar projects. I cannot accept a man as an expert who—as I well know from the old Reichstag—was declared by the Government to be the prime mover in the deportation of the Belgian unemployed—opposed by the majority of the Reichstag—the deportation of 60,000 people which created so much bad blood between us and the Belgians, and still compromises Germany."

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 306.

manageable compass. A Government without Social Democratic elements seems to me quite out of the question in the next few years, if the nation is not to stagger from one general strike into another, ”<sup>1</sup>

When forming his Government he was in a position to carry out his own precept, which did not in any way differ from the view of the Reichswehr. The Reichswehr, like the capitalist parties, considered the Socialists as a tool to be used so long as it was required, but to be discarded immediately after. Already on August 10, 1923, foreseeing the imminent fall of the Cuno Government, Stresemann, at a meeting of the People's Party, suggested the formation of a big coalition with the Socialists, “especially as it offers the added attraction of separating the moderate constitutional wing of the Social Democrats from the Radicals.”<sup>2</sup>

Three days later he became Chancellor of a Government comprising four Socialists: Sollmann, Minister of the Interior, Hilferding, Finance, Radbruch, Justice, and Schmidt, Vice-Chancellor. Stresemann himself took the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, which he retained until his death in 1929. The other Ministers were Populists, Democrats (with the eternal Dr Gessler as Reichswehr Minister) and Centrists. Dr Luther continued as Minister of Agriculture.

During the war, Stresemann figured as a fanatical nationalist. In his Reichstag speeches he supported the annexationist program of the General Staff. His diatribes against Britain were of particular violence. The German publishers of Stresemann's Memoirs described his war-time attitude thus:

“During the war, Stresemann's attitude was that of the normal patriotic but intelligent German. He subordinated, with all the usual Teutonic sense of discipline, his judgment to those appointed to guide the nation through the crisis. He supported unlimited U-boat warfare, and there is no reason to suppose that his peace terms would have been any less far-reaching than those outlined by Ludendorff early in 1917.”<sup>3</sup>

After the defeat he became converted to the policy of negotiations and carried it out with remarkable success. His foreign partners never bothered to scrutinize his

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 10.

political past and gave him their unlimited confidence, which he used and abused.<sup>1</sup>

### *End of Passive Resistance*

The Stresemann Government was confronted with a legacy of severe political and social complications, and therefore hastened to put an end to the farce of passive resistance; on September 26, it issued an official statement that passive resistance would cease. This was a capitulation, yet owing to discord among the Allies it opened the door to Germany's political renaissance.

The assumption of power by Stresemann coincided with the delivery of a British note to the French Government on August 11, 1923. The Note made it clear that the British Government regarded the occupation of the Ruhr as illegal, since it had not been decided upon by all the Allies. This British view represented important support for the German thesis, which Stresemann in particular maintained in all his speeches. The British Note suggested that Germany should put an end to passive resistance, but

<sup>1</sup> Ph. Scheidemann, in his *Memoirs of a Social Democrat* (Vol. I., pages 224, 225, 226, 227 and 228) draws a profile of Stresemann which is not without interest:

"All attempts to whitewash him, as being a politician who could go straight and to whom all Annexations were distasteful, are shattered by the simple fact that his speeches and writings are in print under our noses."

"Stresemann did not care a scrap for the ideals of the League of Nations or for idealists in general. His Annexation policy could not have been brought into line with the views he entertained ten years later as German representative to the League. He wanted to annex territory both in the East and West. From the annexed coast of Flanders he intended, however, to hold the mailed fist under the nose of England. By way of a policy of understanding no enforced treaty would have been possible, naturally, and therefore a dictated peace appeared ideal to him, such as the Entente ultimately forced upon us."

Scheidemann puts great stress on Stresemann's hatred of Britain and proves it by several quotations from the latter's books and speeches. Here are some of them:

"We are all agreed in the idea that Germany must be 'greater still' for Germany's glory and the peace of the world. We want a greater Germany—especially along the coastline. We are not without a coastline, but we have no means of extending it eastwards and westwards in order to hold Cronstadt in check on one side and Dover on the other. . . . Our coastline must be lengthened, therefore; England must be checkmated; she must be deprived of the pleasure of playing her own game again. Have we no right to create a German Gibraltar and make the North Sea again the German Ocean?" (From Stresemann's book, *Michel, horch, Der Seewind pfeift*.)

"We all trust that after the War an era of reconciliation with France and Russia will dawn, and that the lapse of years will bring about understanding and peace. But there is one thing no one can expect from the German people—a reconciliation with England. Hate lies too deep; a hate that is morally justified." (From Stresemann's book, *Michel, horch, Der Seewind pfeift*.)

that the occupying Powers should then undertake to restore the state of affairs existing before the occupation. In addition, the British Government insisted on the urgent need of examining Germany's capacity to pay. The Reparations total of 132 billions, said the Note, was far too high. It demanded the appointment of a commission of impartial experts to study the problem of Reparations.

The British view was strongly supported by America, which also desired to bring about a *détente* in Franco-German relations.

Thus isolated as regards her Ruhr policy, and despite the German capitulation, France did not feel strong enough to continue with the policy of sanctions. The Ruhr was evacuated and Germany was granted a moratorium, pending the elaboration of a plan for Reparations payments by American and Allied financial experts.

However, Germany in 1923, was weakened by social troubles of a dual character. On the one hand, there was unrest among the workers, who had been so terribly hard hit by the inflation, while on the other, there was renewed activity on the part of the extreme nationalists, who had been inflamed by the passive resistance campaign. Had the Socialists desired to organize the discontent of the masses and canalize it into a struggle for true democracy, they would have succeeded in defeating the reactionary elements; the Communists alone were too weak to do so. Unfortunately, however, the Socialists adopted the same attitude as in 1918, 1919 and 1920. They placed public order and Germany's political power above all other considerations. Contaminated by the nationalist virus, the Socialists, in 1923, saw only the struggle against France, completely forgetting their duty to the working masses. The trade unions pursued the same line. In the second half of 1923 there were some risings, but these were doomed to failure in advance because the Socialist Party supported the Government and the Army against the workers.

### *Revolt of the Black Reichswehr*

The extreme nationalists had become more audacious. Taking advantage of the atmosphere created by the "holy alliance," they endeavoured to consolidate their position,

discard men of moderate tendencies, and even overthrow the Republic.

The first movement of revolt emanated from the " Black " Reichswehr. When, in 1920, the Reichswehr was obliged to reduce its effectives to 100,000 men, it conceived a plan for maintaining trained reserves in a camouflaged form. Major Buchrucker, a retired officer, was charged with the execution of this plan in the *Wehrkreis III* (Berlin-Brandenburg) area. Buchrucker, in connivance with the General Staff of *Wehrkreis III*, established secret arms dumps and organized volunteer detachments known as *Arbeits-Kommandos* (A.K.). Each detachment was composed of a permanent "*Stammformation*" of a small number of officers and non-commissioned officers, who ensured the continuity of the units and also guarded the arms dumps. The bulk of the volunteers were called up for a few weeks, received their training in rotation and were discharged at the expiration of the period concerned. Thus the Reichswehr had at its disposal an appreciable number of trained reserves ready to take up arms at the first signal, whose existence had escaped the vigilance of the Inter-Allied Control Commission. The Reichswehr Ministry approved of the activities of Buchrucker and *Wehrkreis III*, with Colonel Schleicher exercising supervision over the A. K. on behalf of the Ministry. The volunteers were enlisted by the Reichswehr under contracts describing them as civilian workers working for the garrison commanders. However, these " workers " wore Reichswehr uniform, lived in the military barracks, were trained by *Wehrkreis III*, and received soldier's pay. The A. K. itself fell into the habit of calling itself the " Black Reichswehr."

Buchrucker, the head of the Black Reichswehr, in his book, *Im Schatten Seeckts*, frankly admitted that the finances of his organization were based not only on subsidies from the official Reichswehr, but also on funds supplied by heavy industry, which regarded the A. K. as an anti-revolutionary military body.

By the end of September 1923, the Black Reichswehr already numbered approximately 50,000 men. Their mobilisation centres were at Kuestrin, Spandau, Berlin and Hahneberg, that is, exclusively in the province of Brandenburg. Collaboration with the official Reichswehr

was so intimate that A. K. volunteers in Berlin sometimes mounted guard at the Presidential Palace alternately with Reichswehr sentries. A priceless spectacle—Socialist leader Ebert, President of a democratic Republic, being guarded by illegal troops in the pay of the generals and industrialists. Unfortunately, this picturesque detail reflected a deplorable reality.

The passive resistance in the Ruhr had aroused the Black Reichswehr, which thought that the moment for an open struggle against the Allies was nigh, with the overthrow of the Republic and the proclamation of a military dictatorship as a beginning. When they saw that passive resistance was coming to an end, the Command of the Black Reichswehr decided to act immediately, with a view to overthrowing the Republic and placing power into the hands of the official Reichswehr—but without consulting the latter. Buchrucker's intention was to mobilise the volunteers and effect a surprise occupation of the Government quarter and the chief strategic points of Berlin. On September 15, 1923, Buchrucker issued a mobilisation order, so that his volunteers should be ready for the night of September 29-30.

On September 26, the Government abandoned passive resistance. On the night of 26-27, it proclaimed a state of emergency.<sup>1</sup> Buchrucker, surprised by this development, hastened to the headquarters of *Wehrkreis III* to consult the official Reichswehr as to the opportuneness of his ambitious plan. To his astonishment, they threw cold water on it. They thought that a *coup d'état* at that moment would be senseless and enjoined upon him to countermand his mobilisation order. Buchrucker himself was for complying, but his officers refused. The official Reichswehr then decided to take the matter into its own hands. On September 29, the Reichswehr Minister issued an order for the arrest of Buchrucker. The latter, torn between a sense of discipline as regards the Reichswehr and loyalty to his own men, fled to the fortress of Kuestrin, where a battalion of the Black Reichswehr had already taken position in conformity with a mobilisation order issued by the commander of the A. K. The commander of the

<sup>1</sup> See farther on, p. 335.



garrison alarmed the Reichswehr Ministry in Berlin by reporting that the battalion was in a state of rebellion. Reinforcements despatched to Kuestrin immediately succeeded in disarming the volunteers and Buchrucker was arrested. The other Black Reichswehr battalions, upon learning of the arrest of their leader, also allowed themselves to be disarmed.

Thus the attempt at a *coup d'état* ended in a musical comedy atmosphere. In October, Buchrucker and his accomplices were tried and sentenced to detention in a fortress. They received a pardon from President Hindenburg in 1927.

The *Arbeits-Kommandos* were dissolved, for the Reichswehr would no longer tolerate a military organization that had dared to defy discipline and have a policy of its own.

### *Currency Stabilised at Workers' Expense*

In October there were labour troubles. The working class had been driven to despair by destitution caused by the inflation. In October the weekly wage of a skilled worker represented the price of a hundredweight of potatoes. The pay for ten hours' work was only sufficient to buy a pound of margarine. A pair of ordinary shoes cost six weeks' wages, a man's suit twelve weeks' wages.

The Government no longer had the excuse of passive resistance and was compelled to think of arresting the inflation. There were several plans in existence. Dr Helfferich, Dr Luther and Dr Hilferding each had one. But the true problem was who should pay the cost of the stabilisation of the currency. The industrialists designated the workers as the victims of the operation. It was they, together with the middle class, who had paid for the inflation, so it was for them to pay for stabilisation as well. Since stabilisation involved the fixing of real wages, the industrialists had to compensate themselves in some way for the consequent loss of the power of making continual wage reductions, as they had done with the progress of inflation. They therefore proposed the abolition of the eight-hour working day, almost the only advantage the workers had derived from the November Revolution.

Dr Hilferding, the Reich Minister of Finance, could

scarcely accept such a condition of stabilisation, and in fact rejected it. But it was a simple matter to eliminate his opposition. On October 3, the Stresemann Government resigned, and three days later Stresemann formed a new Government, with Hilferding alone out of it: the Socialists dropped their comrade in the name of the "holy alliance," and allowed the portfolio of Finance to pass to Dr Luther, a man devoted to the interests of heavy industry.

On December 22, 1923, that is, shortly after this change, Dr Hjalmar Schacht, a professional banker, was appointed Governor of the Reichsbank in place of Dr Havenstein who, having held the post since before the war, had just died. Dr Schacht started his public career in 1922, when he was appointed Reich Commissioner for currency affairs.

The new Government, with the Socialists still participating, decided to establish an economic dictatorship, without Reichstag control. On October 13, the Reichstag granted the Government full powers to promulgate decrees having the force of law in economic, financial and social matters.

*Socialist Government of Saxony Suppressed by  
Military Force*

However, there were two States where independent Socialist action was being attempted. This was in Saxony and Thuringia, where Governments of the Left, composed of Socialists and Communists, had been formed. In Saxony this occurred on October 8, the Socialist, Zeigner, becoming Prime Minister. His Government included two Communists, Boettcher and Brandler. The Saxon Government demanded the dissolution of the semi-military organizations, the democratization of the Reichswehr and the abolition of the military dictatorship of General Mueller, commander of *Wehrkreis IV*, which the latter exercised by virtue of powers delegated to him by the Reichswehr Minister and General von Seeckt.<sup>1</sup> In other words, General Mueller had been invested with the executive power in Saxony, despite the existence of a legal Government. On October 17 he went so far as to demand that Zeigner should expel the Communist Boettcher from the Government. The Saxon

<sup>1</sup> See later, p. 335.

Communists replied by demanding the resignation of Gessler, the Reichswehr Minister. The Saxon Socialists sent a delegation to Berlin to ask President Ebert to impose moderation on General Mueller, but they failed in their mission—Ebert never opposed the Reichswehr.

Meanwhile, the workers throughout Germany were in a ferment, with demonstrations being suppressed by the Army and police by force of arms. A bloody balance sheet for the workers once more: eight dead and fifteen injured in Berlin, one dead and two injured in Erfurt, one injured in Cassel, three dead and twelve injured at Essen, eighteen injured at Marienburg, two dead and several injured at Frankfurt. Blood flowed also at Beuthen, Hanover, Luebeck, Brunswick, Duesseldorf and Allenstein. The most serious outbreak occurred in Hamburg, where street fights between the workers and the police, reinforced by detachments of marines, took place on October 23 and 24. On the evening of October 24, the workers were defeated, with twenty-one dead and one hundred and seventy-five injured.

The workers' revolts and demonstrations were beginning to scare the Reichswehr and the capitalists, who had not yet forgotten the events of November 1918. As Ebert and the other Socialist leaders remained loyal to the Reichswehr, all that was necessary was to suppress the Governments of Saxony and Thuringia, the two potential rallying points of the workers' movement. On October 28, Chancellor Stresemann addressed an ultimatum to the Saxon Government, demanding Zeigner's resignation by the following day and threatening in case of non-compliance to appoint a Reich Commissioner to administer the country with the aid of General Mueller.

On the same date occurred the bloody repression of a workers' demonstration by the Reichswehr at Freiberg, Saxony. There were twenty-five dead and fifty-two injured among the workers. As Zeigner refused to yield, General Mueller was officially authorized by the Reich Government to depose the Saxon Government by force. On October 28, General Mueller notified the Zeigner Government of its dissolution and at the same time forbade the Saxon Diet to sit.

The Socialists and Communists of Saxony refused to

bow to this, claiming that the Diet alone had the right to appoint or dissolve a Saxon Government, and Chancellor Stresemann, therefore, on October 29, appointed Dr Heinze (People's Party) Reich Commissioner for Saxony. Heinze immediately on his appointment called upon the Reichswehr to drive out the Saxon Government. Detachments of soldiers were sent to all the Ministries, and the Ministers were ejected. The Socialist and Communist newspapers were suppressed. By the beginning of November, General Mueller had restored "order." The Thuringian Government of the Left was suppressed in the same way.

That was how Stresemann carried out the program he had outlined before Lord d'Abernon on October 17, 1922:

"It is absolutely necessary to strengthen the Government. We must have a Government that in case of necessity will shoot. Germany cannot stand Bolshevism fomenting mischief. There must be shooting. Perhaps we shall bring Noske back—he was a good man, and shot in case of necessity. Even the Majority Socialists agree that order has got to be maintained with vigour."<sup>1</sup>

A historian of the Weimar Republic wrote in this connection:

"The action of the Reich against Saxony was an act of arbitrary brutality and an open breach of the law. Both State Governments had come into being constitutionally and were supported by the majority in the Diets. Both Governments had in every way discharged their liabilities to the Reich. But their political colour did not suit those who were at the head of affairs in Berlin and so they were driven out by the Reichswehr."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Socialist Party left the Reichswehr and the capitalists a free hand. They abolished the eight-hour day; the Socialists agreed. They suppressed workers' demonstrations by force of arms; the Socialists acquiesced. They drove out the two State Governments of the Left; and the order was given by a Government in which the Socialists were participating.

However, the working masses were beginning to drift away from the Party and the trade unions. Both organizations lost many members, who naturally ceased to pay their subscriptions.

The Party then realized that it must save its face and cease sharing public responsibility for all that was then

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. II, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> A Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, pp. 211-212.

going on in Germany. On November 2 the Socialist Ministers resigned from the Government which, however, continued in power. On November 16 it introduced the *Rentenmark*, which represented the first attempt to stabilise the currency. The *Rentenmark* was based on a fiction, as its cover was Germany's immovable property. The currency was not really stabilised until 1924, when the mark received gold cover through the Dawes Loan.

### *Return of the ex-Crown Prince*

On November 15, 1923, the Crown Prince left Wieringen (Holland) for Oels (Prussian Silesia). After five years of the Republic, this representative of the dynasty overthrown by the Revolution, who had in vain been claimed as a war criminal by the Allies, was able to return to Germany with the official permission of the Republican Government. This was the work of Chancellor Stresemann, who had always maintained respectfully cordial relations with the ex-Crown Prince. He had even visited him at Wieringen in 1921. Once he was Chancellor, he set about preparing the way for the ex-Crown Prince's return, ready to brave indignation abroad. But was he not obliged to wage a fierce struggle at home before he was able to grant his friend permission to return? Did he not meet with resistance at least on the part of the Socialists?

On October 10, 1923, Stresemann wrote to the ex-Crown Prince :

"As my colleague Severing (the Prussian Socialist Minister of the Interior) has already informed Herr Mueldner (the ex-Crown Prince's aide-de-camp), he takes it for granted that Your Imperial Highness will be able to return to Germany in the late autumn, and I share this view. . . . I shall be glad from the bottom of my heart to see Your Imperial Highness home again soon."<sup>1</sup>

On October 24, 1923, he wrote to his Imperial correspondent :

"I am delighted to inform you that in yesterday's sitting of the Cabinet it was unanimously agreed that your application of last August for authority to return to Germany should be sanctioned in principle . . . While acquainting Your Imperial Highness of the Cabinet's decision, I cannot forbear expressing my own personal pleasure that this decision

<sup>1</sup> *Stresemann—His Diaries*, Vol. I., p. 218.

was given by the Cabinet on my proposal, and, as I may permit myself to add, was reached unanimously and without objection or criticism, after my statement had been heard "1

In 1918 the Allies had declared that they were waging war against the Hohenzollerns; in 1923 they tolerated the return of the ex-Crown Prince. In 1918 the Socialists had been carried to power owing to the overthrow of the Hohenzollerns by the workers and soldiers; in 1923 they voted "without objection or criticism" for the return of the ex-Crown Prince. "Time marches on."

### *Adolf Hitler and his Political Program*

In November 1923 occurred a political adventure that brought the name of Adolf Hitler into the limelight. An account of the life and political faith of this man is outside the scope of this book, and we are interested in him only in so far as his activities serve to throw a light on the history of the Republic and on the ideas of the active politicians of the Weimar period.

Born in the Austrian village of Braunau, near the German frontier, the son of a customs official, Adolf Hitler first went to Linz, then to Vienna, where he spent a long period in utter destitution, as he had learned no trade. He took a keen interest in the Austrian Pan-German and anti-Semitic movement, by whose leader, von Schoenerer, he was profoundly impressed. The last two years before the first world war Hitler spent in Munich, where he voluntarily enlisted, in 1914, in the 16th Bavarian Infantry Regiment. Towards the end of the war this obscure and unknown soldier was in hospital in Prussian Pomerania, and it was there that he learned about the defeat and the Revolution. Returning to Munich in March 1919, Hitler was appointed "Bildungsoffizier" (intelligence officer) of the provisional Reichswehr. In this capacity he was instructed by his superiors to keep them informed of the activities of the various political organizations in Bavaria. The circumstances in which Hitler got into touch with one of these organizations, *Die deutsche Arbeiter-Partei*, are indicated by a German author as follows: "Captain Mayr, who later became a Social Democrat and was on the General Staff of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

the Republican Reichsbanner, in his capacity as the head of the 'political department' of the Gruppenkommando—there was such a thing!—instructed Hitler, his subordinate, to have a look at something called the '*Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei*.'"<sup>1</sup> The party Hitler was thus ordered to observe was then only an insignificant group with violently anti-Semitic and reactionary tendencies.<sup>2</sup> When, on September 16, 1919, he joined it, he was its seventh member, and the funds of the organization amounted to exactly 7.50 marks. The organization was developed chiefly by Hitler, who in 1919 and the succeeding years organized public meetings, provoking the opposition of the parties of the Left.

He made his *début* on October 16, at a meeting of 110 persons. On February 24, 1920, he was already addressing an audience of 2,000. It was at the latter meeting that he presented his program, drafted in twenty-five points. This became the official program of the party, and was as follows:

"The Program of the German Workers' Party is a program of the age. Once the aims postulated in the Program have been achieved, the leaders do not intend to set new ones merely in order to render possible the Party's continuance through the artificial intensification of the discontent of the masses.

"1. We demand, on the basis of the right of self-determination of all peoples, the union of all Germans into a Greater Germany.

"2. We demand equal rights for the German people with other nations and the abolition of the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St Germain.

"3. We demand land (colonies) to nourish our people and to settle our surplus population

"4. None but members of the nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the nation.

"5. Those who are not citizens of the State may live in Germany only as guests and must be subject to the Alien laws.

"6. None but citizens of the State shall be entitled to decide as to the leadership and laws of the State. We therefore demand that all

<sup>1</sup> R. Olden, *Hitler, Agent der Macht*, Querido Verlag, N.V. Amsterdam, 1935, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Die deutsche Arbeiter-Partei* was founded on January 5, 1919, under the name of *Der deutsche Arbeiter-Verein* by some members of another nationalist organization, *Die Thule Gesellschaft*, which in turn was founded in 1918 by the members of the *Germanenorden*, an anti-Semitic society which had been in existence since May, 1914. This genealogy is of interest because the *Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei*, embryo of the National Socialist Party, was influenced by the programs of both the *Germanenorden* and the *Thule Gesellschaft*. The latter used the swastika (emblem of the German anti-Semites) and their greeting was "*Heil und Sieg*," which the National Socialists changed into "*Sieg Heil*!"

public appointments of whatever kind, whether in the Reich, the States, or the municipalities, shall be held by none but citizens of the State

"We oppose the corrupt parliamentary method of filling posts solely according to considerations of party, and regardless of character and ability

"7. We demand that the State shall make it its first duty to ensure employment and a livelihood for citizens of the State. If it is not possible to support the entire population of the State, then foreign nationals (non-citizens of the State) shall be expelled from the Reich.

"8 All further immigration of non-Germans shall be prevented We demand that all non-Germans who immigrated into Germany after August 2, 1914, shall be compelled to leave the Reich

"9 All citizens of the Reich shall possess equal rights and duties.

"10. It must be the first duty of every citizen of the State to perform either intellectual or physical work The activities of the individual must not conflict with the interests of the community, but must be carried on within the general framework and for the benefit of all We therefore demand :

"11. Abolition of unearned incomes.

#### *Breaking the Servitude of Interest*

"12. In view of the enormous sacrifices of blood and treasure that every war demands of the nation, personal enrichment through war must be regarded as a crime against the nation We therefore demand complete confiscation of all war profits.

"13. We demand nationalization of all businesses already amalgamated (trusts).

"14. We demand profit-sharing in big concerns.

"15. We demand a large-scale development of provision for old age.

"16. We demand the creation and maintenance of a healthy middle class, immediate communalization of the large department stores, and their lease at low rates to small traders Most careful consideration for all small traders as regards deliveries to the State, the Provincial Governments or the municipalities

"17. We demand a land reform adapted to our national requirements, the passing of a law for the confiscation of land for communal purposes without compensation. Abolition of mortgage interest and prevention of all speculation in land

"18. We demand ruthless war upon those whose activities injure the common interest. Base criminals against the nation, usurers, profiteers, etc., shall be punished with death, whatever their creed or race.

"19 We demand that Roman Law, which serves the materialistic world order, shall be replaced by a German Common Law.

"20 In order to enable every capable and industrious German to obtain a higher education and occupy a leading position, the State must provide for a thorough development of the national educational system The syllabuses of all educational institutions shall be adapted to the requirements of practical life. The school must inculcate the idea of



the State (science of citizenship) with the dawning of intelligence. We demand that specially talented children of poor parents shall be educated at the expense of the State, regardless of class or occupation.

"21. The State shall raise the standard of national health by protecting mother and child, by prohibiting juvenile labour, by promoting physical efficiency through compulsory physical training and sports, and by the most far-reaching support of clubs engaged in the physical training of the young

"22 We demand the abolition of the mercenary army and the formation of a National Army.

"23. We demand that the law should combat the deliberate political lie and its dissemination in the Press. In order to render possible the creation of a German Press, we demand that :

- (a) All editors and contributors of newspapers published in the German language shall be members of the nation.
- (b) The appearance of non-German newspapers shall be subject to express permission from the State. They must not be printed in the German language.
- (c) It should be prohibited by law for non-Germans to have any financial participation in or to influence German newspapers, and demand that infringement shall be punished with the suppression of such newspaper and with the immediate expulsion from the Reich of the non-Germans concerned.

Newspapers offending against the common weal shall be prohibited. We demand that the law shall combat a tendency in art and literature that exerts a disintegrating influence on our national life, and that institutions offending against the above demand shall be closed down.

"24. We demand freedom for all religious denominations in the State, unless they endanger the existence thereof or offend against the morality and moral sense of the Teutonic race.

"The Party as such stands for positive Christianity, but does not bind itself to any particular denomination. It combats the Jewish materialistic spirit in us, as well as outside, and is convinced that our nation can achieve permanent recovery only on the principle of

#### COMMON INTEREST BEFORE SELF-INTEREST.

"25. For the realisation of all this, we demand : the creation of a strong central Reich Government. Absolute authority of the political-central Parliament over the entire Reich and its organizations in general.

"The formation of Diets and vocational Chambers to implement in the individual Federal States the general laws promulgated by the Reich.

"The leaders of the Party promise to fight ruthlessly for the realization of the above Points, if necessary staking their own lives.

"Munich, February 24, 1920."

It is useful to recall the contents of this long and somewhat tedious document, because it embodies the credo that has attracted so many Germans to the National

Socialist Party. Even men like Otto Strasser and Hermann Rauschning, who, for various reasons, were combating Adolf Hitler, had been in the past attracted by the twenty-five Points and *Mein Kampf*, the gospel of National Socialism, and accepted the principles of the Party programme.

*Bavaria—Promised Land of the Nationalists*

On April 1, 1920, Hitler left the Army to devote himself entirely to his party, whose name he changed into *Nazional-sozialistische deutsche Arbeiter-Partei*, or N. S. D. A. P., giving it a banner of his own design, with the notorious swastika of the German anti-Semites in the centre. Two theorists of the movement, Dietrich Eckart and Dr Alfred Rosenberg, joined the party at this time. On Eckart's advice, Hitler, with the aid of several rich men and General von Epp, then serving with the Bavarian Reichswehr, purchased the *Voelkischer Beobachter*. On July 29, 1921, he became the recognised chairman of the National Socialist Party. On April 3, 1921, he formed the semi-military units which were at first known as "sports and athletic associations," but from November 4 became *Sturm-Abteilungen* (the notorious S.A.). The organization of the S.A. was entrusted to ex-officers provided by Captain Ehrhardt of "Consul," the secret association that had become famous, among other things, through the murder of Rathenau. The leaders of the S.A. already included Rudolf Hess. By the end of December 1922, the S.A. numbered 6,000 men. This also entailed development of the party itself.

In 1923 Bavaria was the rampart of German reaction. Nationalists were streaming there from all parts of the Reich, tolerated and sometimes supported by the Bavarian Government, which itself had marked conservative tendencies, being headed by one of the leaders of the Bavarian Catholic Party, von Knilling. In February 1923 Hitler concluded a pact with the other nationalist organizations, as the *Reichsflagge*, the *Oberland Bund* and others. An important part in bringing about this combination was played by Bavarian Reichswehr Captain Roehm who, though a regular officer, was at the same time a member of the National Socialist Party. The combination of nationalist semi-military organizations thus formed was placed under

the command of a retired officer, Lieut.-Col. Kriebel, while the supreme command of the S.A. was entrusted to Flight-Captain Hermann Goering. On May 1, at a place near Munich, there was a march-past of the S.A. and the other nationalist semi-military organizations; nearly 10,000 armed men participated.

On September 1 and 2 they celebrated the anniversary of the Battle of Sedan, at Nuremberg. On that occasion 70,000 men were reviewed by Hitler, by whose side stood General Ludendorff. This was the latter's first public appearance since the Kapp putsch, and he came to add the prestige of his name to the National Socialist movement. After this celebration the union of armed nationalist organizations was christened "*Deutscher Kampfbund*." The immediate program of the Bund was to march on Berlin and there proclaim a nationalist dictatorship, whose aim would be to restore the Holy Empire of the German Nation, as Hitler himself said on September 12. In October 1923, Lieutenant Rossbach, the famous North German racist, and himself the leader of secret organizations, arrived in Munich and joined the National Socialist Party.

While the National Socialist Party, with its S.A. and the other armed formations allied with it in the *Kampfbund*, had a frankly Pan-German tendency, and was resuscitating the ideas of the *Alldeutscher Verband* and other pre-war Pan-German associations, there was another reactionary group in Munich with a particularist tendency. The group was of a distinctly Bavarian and Monarchist character, and dreamed only of the restoration of the Wittelsbach dynasty, even at the price of a break with Berlin. It was headed by the Bavarian ex-Premier, von Kahr who, in 1919, in association with Escherich, had founded the nationalist semi-military organization "*Orgesch*." While Hitler and Ludendorff cried, "Forward march—on Berlin!" and wanted to strengthen the unity of the Reich by a vast nationalist movement, the Bavarian legitimists and Catholics were ready to cry, "Los von Berlin!" with a view to establishing an autonomous monarchist Bavaria. The real patron of this tendency was the Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht, who had earned special notoriety during the war by advising his troops to be particularly ruthless with the British.

At bottom, there was fierce antagonism between the two movements, as is bound to be the case between Pan-Germans and Separatists. What united them for the moment was their common hatred for any independent labour movement.

*Conflict between Bavaria and the Reich*

On September 25, 1923, Hitler became the political leader of the *Kampfbund*. The following day the Bavarian Government appointed von Kahr State Commissioner for Bavaria with plenary powers. Von Kahr immediately proclaimed a state of emergency in Bavaria. This act was contrary to the Constitution and a clear act of rebellion against the central authorities in Berlin. The Stresemann Government on its part hastened, on the night of September 26-27, to proclaim a state of emergency throughout the Reich. Under the notorious Article 48 of the Constitution, first applied by Noske in 1919 to suppress the Governments of the Left in Saxony and Bavaria, the executive power was placed entirely into the hands of the Reichswehr Minister or, in practice, into those of General von Seeckt, the head of the Reichswehr. The civil administration everywhere in the Reich was subordinated to the military authorities. Martial law was proclaimed. Accordingly, from Berlin's point of view authority in Bavaria was represented by General von Lossow, Commander of *Wehrkreis VII* (Bavaria).

However, here the Reich Government met with an unexpected obstacle. For General von Lossow refused to obey the orders of General von Seeckt, ranging himself beside von Kahr, who immediately appointed him Commander-in-Chief of the Bavarian Reichswehr. General von Seeckt replied by dismissing General von Lossow who, however, took no notice and continued in command of the Bavarian Army. On October 27, President Ebert officially called upon von Kahr to respect the Reich Constitution, but von Kahr refused. The situation was now clear—Bavaria was ready even to disrupt the unity of the Reich. Naturally, this was not to the liking of Hitler and Ludendorff, who regarded von Kahr with the utmost suspicion.

On November 4 General von Lossow disclosed his

intention of creating a Directorate of three (von Kahr, von Lossow, and Colonel von Seisser, Munich's police chief) pending the restoration of the Wittelsbachs. On November 6 von Kahr convoked the leaders of the *Kampfbund* and informed them, in the presence of General von Lossow, that he would no longer tolerate their agitation, at the same time forbidding any *coup d'état* apart from the one he was himself preparing.

### *Hitler's Coup de Force*

At this point Hitler decided to force the hands of the Bavarian leaders and draw them into a *coup d'état*, not for Bavarian autonomy, but for the establishment of a nationalist régime in the whole Reich. "In the meantime the latent hostility between White and Blue (the Bavarian colours) and Black-White and Red (Reich colours) expressed itself in the manner made known by the events that followed," wrote Stresemann in a contemporaneous note.<sup>1</sup>

According to Hitler's plans, the stroke was to take place on the night of November 10-11, but an unforeseen incident caused him to make a change. This was the calling of a big political meeting for the evening of November 8, at a Munich beer hall; von Kahr was to speak and the members of the Bavarian Government were to be present. Hitler decided to go there with his S.A. and surprise von Kahr and von Lossow into giving way.

The meeting on the evening of the 8th was attended by 3,000 people. While von Kahr was addressing them, Hitler with his comrades-in-arms broke into the hall. Taking advantage of the confusion caused by his appearance, he drew von Kahr, von Lossow and von Seisser into an adjoining room. Then, returning to the hall, he made an impassioned speech, in the course of which he announced the dismissal of the Reich President and the Stresemann Government and also the new appointments: himself as head of the Reich Government, General Ludendorff as head of the Reichswehr, General von Lossow as Reichswehr Minister, Colonel von Seisser as Reich Minister of Police, and von Kahr as Regent of Bavaria. Finally, he proclaimed a march on Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 198.

It will be noted that Hitler was rather generous with his appointments even as regards his Bavarian opponents. The latter, incidentally, had stayed in the adjoining room. Ludendorff had meanwhile arrived at the beer hall and was exhorting the three Bavarians to join Hitler. In the end they gave way, probably on account of the revolvers that were levelled at them. Returning to the hall, von Kahr announced to the meeting his adherence to the national revolution as Regent of the Kingdom of Bavaria (that is, as representative of the Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria). Ludendorff also declared his adherence. The crowd, which was now quite at sea, applauded the speakers, then dispersed.

However, Hitler, intoxicated by his success, made the mistake of leaving the beer hall for awhile in order to get into touch with members of the *Kampfbund*. During his absence General Ludendorff took the word of honour of Kahr, Lossow and Seisser and, reassured by their promise to remain loyal to the national revolution, he allowed them to depart. When Hitler returned to the beer hall, the three Bavarians had already left.

While the *Kampfbund* detachments were marching on Munich and beginning to occupy certain strategic points, von Kahr and von Lossow, now free again, decided to crush the Hitler-Ludendorff revolt. They were strengthened in their opposition by a message from Crown Prince Rupprecht, forbidding them to enter into a coalition with Ludendorff. They also had to take into account the feelings of the Catholics, whose head, Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, was hostile to the National Socialist doctrine.

On the morning of November 9, von Kahr issued the following proclamation :

"The imposture and bad faith of a few ambitious individuals have converted a demonstration of national re-awakening into a scene of hateful violence. The statements wrung from us, from myself, General von Lossow and Colonel von Seisser, at the point of the revolver, are null and void. The National Socialist Party, as well as the *Oberland Bund* and the *Reichsflagge* are hereby dissolved."

Hitler and Ludendorff replied to this declaration of war by attempting a *coup de force* against the Bavarian Government. At 11 a.m. on November 9, a column of *Kampfbund*

partisans headed by Hitler and Ludendorff set out for the centre of Munich. This move had no chance of success, seeing that both the Reichswehr and the police were against them. They were in fact stopped by a detachment of police. A volley of rifle fire, which struck down some of the demonstrators, was sufficient to disperse the rest. The *coup de force* was a lamentable failure.

The leaders of the movement, except for General Ludendorff, were immediately arrested. They were tried on February 26, 1924, by the High Court. The accused included Ludendorff, Hitler, Frick, Lieut.-Col. Kriebel, the military leader of the *Kampfbund*, Captain Roehm and others. They were all sentenced to detention in a fortress for terms ranging from five years to fifteen months, with suspensions. Ludendorff alone was acquitted.

Hitler and Hess were incarcerated in the fortress of Landsberg-on-the-Lech, where Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, the gospel of National Socialism. The movement now seemed to have been crushed.

*Reconciliation between Bavarian and Reich Governments—  
Fall of Stresemann—Enigmatic Role of General von Seeckt*

After the events of November 9, von Kahr and von Lossow, possibly feeling weakened by the resounding discord in Bavarian reactionary circles, decided to seek an accommodation with the Stresemann Government. And the Stresemann Government, which had dealt so severely with the Left Governments of Saxony and Thuringia, showed great generosity to the reactionaries of Munich. By tacit agreement the conflict was forgotten, and Bavaria reverted to obedience to the Reich.

On November 23, Stresemann lost the support of the Reichstag majority as Chancellor. But he had already been deserted a few weeks earlier by General von Seeckt who, on November 5, said to him: "You cannot remain Chancellor; resign; make this sacrifice for the Fatherland."

General von Seeckt's momentary negative attitude towards Stresemann is difficult to explain, for both before and after this their relations were always characterised by

mutual confidence. Why then von Seeckt's sudden request that Stresemann should resign from the Chancellorship? The answer may perhaps be found in the following passage from Thyssen's book<sup>1</sup>:

"I remember, however, a very revealing detail that might possibly interest future historians. General von Seeckt, who still was chief of the Reichswehr in Berlin, had sent his wife to Munich during these critical weeks. She returned to Berlin only after the 9th of November. However, Seeckt had protested to the Bavarian Government when the latter assumed authority over the troops stationed in Bavaria under General von Lossow. Was he playing a double game? He had not supported the coup attempted by Kapp in 1920, which had failed through the default of the army. Was he now—in 1923—planning to execute his own coup by seeking the support of the Bavarians? The presence at Munich of Frau von Seeckt seems to corroborate this explanation. If this was so, the hasty action precipitated by Hitler caused the failure of the entire scheme."

It is not precluded that von Seeckt at heart wanted to come to an understanding with the Bavarian reactionaries, while Stresemann was less inclined to do so, as he had grave suspicions concerning their sentiments as to the unity of the Reich.

In this connection Lord d'Abernon on November 10, 1923, made the following entry in his diary: "In military circles stories are current that von Seeckt is hostile to Stresemann. This, however, is probably due to the fact that he thinks Stresemann too much of a politician, too much of a talker, and not sufficiently a man of action and of decision. Von Seeckt is intimate with Ebert, the two being close friends."<sup>2</sup>

### *Marx Government Abolishes Eight-Hour Day*

However, Stresemann's resignation was delayed for some weeks by the events in Bavaria. But on November 23, all the parties, except the Centre, the Democrats and the People's Party, voted against him. The new Government was formed by Wilhelm Marx, a member of the conservative Right wing of the Centre. Luther continued as Minister of Finance, Gessler as Reichswehr Minister, and Stresemann, with the consent of all parties, as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new Government was purely bourgeois and was based

<sup>1</sup> *I Pared Hitler*, p. 115

<sup>2</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. II., p. 271.



on a coalition between the People's Party, the Centre and the Democrats. Yet on December 8, 1923, when this Government asked the Reichstag to grant it the same plenary powers as it had granted to the Stresemann Government, that is, dictatorial powers in economic, financial and social matters, the Socialists joined the other parties in passing a law beginning with these words: "The Reich Government is empowered to take such measures as it may consider necessary and urgent in view of the need of the people and the Reich . . ." It was thus that the Socialist Party, though this time out of the Government, wanted to serve the cause of "order" in Germany, despite the fact that this "order" meant reaction, militarism and the triumph of the capitalists over the workers. By virtue of these plenary powers the Government on December 21, 1923, abolished the eight-hour working day. This grave injustice was confirmed by a law passed by the Reichstag on April 14, 1927. The decree of December 21, 1923, permitted a working day of from ten to twelve hours. Thanks to Socialist connivance, the eight-hour day, which the workers had conquered in 1918, lasted only five years and was not restored again in Germany, though it was scrupulously observed in the other Continental countries.

The stabilisation of the currency could thus be carried out entirely at the expense of the workers. Here is the balance sheet:

"Unemployment had attained vast proportions, since the easy sale and export conditions of the inflation period no longer existed to help the German manufacturers. In July, 1923, the number of unemployed in receipt of relief throughout Germany was only 180,000. In December it was a million and a half. . . .

"The effect of the loss of the eight-hours day upon the majority of German workers is seen from the following Trade Union statistics, which, though they only include a minority of German workers, do on the whole give a true picture of the situation. Of the workers included in these statistics compiled in May, 1924—45 per cent. worked up to 48 hours a week, 42 per cent. from 48 to 54 hours, and 13 per cent. over 54 hours a week. The hours of work were, as a rule, longest in the largest concerns. Moreover, wages during the first months after the stabilisation were exceedingly low."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, thanks to the servile policy of the Socialists, the workers in 1923, as in 1929, 1919 and 1918, were sacrificed to the generals and the capitalists.

<sup>1</sup> A. Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, p. 219.

*Abolition of Jury Courts*

By virtue of its plenary powers, the Government promulgated seventy decrees during the period from December 8, 1923, to February 15, 1924. Apart from the abolition of the eight-hour day, there was another decree that put the clock back considerably, even as compared with Imperial legislation. This decree, dated January 4, 1924, and initiated by Erich Emminger, the Minister of Justice (Bavarian People's Party—i.e., the Bavarian Catholic Centre), abolished the jury courts introduced in Germany by the law of January 27, 1877. The democratic system under which a jury of twelve persons decided the question of guilt independently of the professional judge, was replaced by a mixed system, under which the criminal courts were composed of three professional judges and six jurymen, who decided jointly both the question of guilt and that of the penalty.

When, in 1924, the Reichstag showed signs of wishing to revoke the decrees, President Ebert, in agreement with Chancellor Marx, dissolved the Reichstag and ordered new elections.

*"The Pleasure of Playing at Soldiers"*

On November 23 — the day of his resignation as Chancellor—Stresemann made a farewell speech to representatives of the foreign Press in Berlin. He reassured them as to the atmosphere in Germany, but let fall a remark which escaped the attention of the foreign world at the time :

"A few days ago in a Berlin theatre," he said, "the audience burst into spontaneous applause merely because the orchestra began to play an old military march—not a German march, either, but an Austrian one, the Radetzky march. Do not think that this meant a demonstration in favour of a war of revenge—not a bit of it. But the army and all that goes with it has been in the tradition of the German people for a hundred years and it would betray a very poor knowledge of men to believe that such a tradition could be uprooted when a people is bidden by the terms of a treaty to give up compulsory military service."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stresemann—*His Diaries*, Vol I., p. 244.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STRESEMANN ERA. LOCARNO AND THE BERLIN TREATY

#### *Stresemann's Political Aims*

THE period from 1924 till 1930 was characterised by sustained prosperity, provisional stabilisation of the internal situation, and a foreign policy of appeasement. This period might be called the Stresemann era, for the scene was completely dominated by the powerful personality of the Reich Foreign Minister. His main idea was to break the isolation which Germany had brought upon herself in 1914, bring about a *rapprochement* with Britain and France, without, however, losing close contact with Russia, and restore Germany to the position of a Great Power. He succeeded, just as Talleyrand had succeeded in a similar task at the Congress of Vienna. He had placed Germany on the path of renascence, at the end of which Adolf Hitler was waiting with his *Grossdeutschland*.

When, in 1923, Stresemann had to resign the Chancellorship, all the political parties agreed that he should continue as Minister of Foreign Affairs. After the lamentable failure of passive resistance in the Ruhr, everyone in Germany realized the need for a *rapprochement* with the Allies, with a view to effacing the consequences of the defeat through negotiation, instead of through an open struggle, for which the country was in any case not strong enough. Even Hugenberg's nationalist Press paid homage to Stresemann: "Chancellor Stresemann," it said, "has gone, but Stresemann, the German, remains." The basic principle of Stresemann's policy was admirably summed up at about the same time by the *Baseler Nachrichten*, a Swiss paper:

"His supreme principle that no material sacrifice is too great to deliver the Fatherland from its chains (*i.e.* the Versailles Treaty), is inspired by the work of Hardenberg and Stein, who in almost identical circumstances freed Prussia from servitude to Napoleon."

Stresemann himself said the same thing in a different way, indirectly emphasising that his policy of appeasement

was only a provisional policy dictated by Germany's temporary weakness: "The only practicable way is for the moment to recognise the obligations imposed upon us by the Versailles Treaty."<sup>1</sup> This "for the moment" is more eloquent than any commentary, unless it is that of Stresemann himself: "Our policy is inspired solely by the idea that, having no other means of action, we must for the moment endeavour to gain at least a few years of tranquillity, regain possession of our frontiers and rejoin the twelve million Germans of occupied Germany."<sup>2</sup> The policy of appeasement in his view was justified only so long as there were no other means of action. The same maxim was scrupulously observed by Hitler until 1938, that is, until other means of action were available to him. "The ways are changeable, the aims eternal. Stresemann has embraced that axiom."<sup>3</sup>

The questions that claimed Stresemann's immediate attention in 1924 were: evacuation of the Ruhr by the French and Belgian troops, settlement of the Reparations problem, and the securing of foreign credits. Events were dominated by the economic factor.

At this time the United States was the most powerful State in the world. It possessed vast resources and was looking for opportunities for investment. While pursuing a policy of isolation from and non-intervention in the political affairs of Europe, the Americans decided to participate in her economic affairs, with a view to relieving the congestion in their money market. They turned their attention to Germany, where they were hoping to invest their capital at a profit and without risk. Germany had such a reputation for commercial probity that it did not occur to anyone that within a short time it would turn out that all this foreign capital had been poured down the sink. The British were also prepared to make an economic *rapprochement* to Germany and establish close collaboration with her for the benefit and prosperity of both countries. The concordant desire of the two Anglo-Saxon countries met with no great resistance in France. France, despite

<sup>1</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann*, French translation, Vol. I, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> *Stresemann*, by R. Baron von Rheinbaben, 1928, p. 242.

her political success in the Ruhr, and despite Germany's capitulation in November 1923, was beginning to feel acutely the exhaustion caused by four years of war. The idea of an economic and political *rapprochement* with her "hereditary" enemy began to gain ground, and finally triumphed in May 1924, after the parliamentary elections that brought victory to the Left bloc and meant the discarding of Poincaré and his policy of rigorous enforcement of the Versailles Treaty. The whole world was anxious to forget the war as soon as possible and have peace and prosperity at any price. The Great Powers which had fought Germany for four years and had vanquished her at the cost of immense sacrifices, no longer wanted to recall the past, and decided to trust the new Republic. The unbounded optimism prevailing in Paris, London and Washington was very propitious for Stresemann, who immediately seized the hand extended to him.

What he wanted in the first place was to open the gates of the Reich to the flood of foreign money, the only thing that could ensure for Germany the period of prosperity that was indispensable for her economic recovery. The need of securing foreign credits was grasped by the whole of Germany. From the Socialists to the German Nationals, there was an absolute concordance of opinion in this matter. The Reichswehr also understood this, for foreign money meant the development of industry, without which the rebuilding of military power was inconceivable. Stresemann's efforts to find a solution of the Reparations problem—a condition of the foreign credits—were backed by all the parties. The racialists alone continued to oppose the policy of appeasement, but they had no influence on the policy of the Reich once the Reichswehr and industry understood and supported the action of the Foreign Minister.

### *Normalisation of the Internal Situation*

In order to restore foreign confidence and lure foreign investors on by the chance of profits to be made in Germany, it was necessary first of all to give the impression that the régime had been definitely stabilised, and that Germany intended to pursue a policy of peace both at home and

abroad.<sup>1</sup> The first step in this direction was made on February 13, 1924, when the Reich President abolished the state of emergency.

On February 18, 1924, an agreement was concluded between the Reichswehr Ministry and the General Staff of *Wehrkreis VII* (Bavaria) ending the conflict between Bavaria and the Reich. At about the same time, von Kahr gave up his post as Commissioner-General, while von Knilling was replaced as Premier of Bavaria by Held, one of the leaders of the Bavarian People's Party. This party was only a replica of the Catholic Centre, whose organization did not cover Bavaria. Both parties were Catholic, but the Bavarian one differed from the Centre by its frankly anti-Republican and distinctly anti-Semitic attitude.

*Favourable Attitude of Britain and U.S.A.*

There were two Ambassadors in Berlin who bent their energies to the task of collaboration with Stresemann—Mr Houghton, the American Ambassador, and Lord d'Abernon, the British Ambassador. They aided Stresemann with their counsel.

Hoping to be able to play Britain out against France, and discounting the fear of French hegemony on the Continent that arose immediately after the war, the Germans overwhelmed Lord d'Abernon with assurances of friendship and admiration for Britain. It is sufficient to turn the pages of Lord d'Abernon's memoirs to see how Germans of all political groups were paying court to Britain.

Lord d'Abernon himself viewed British policy towards Germany and France as follows :

"Regarding the whole position in Central Europe and the problem of what policy England should adopt, the clearest conclusion appears to be that the essential interest of England is to prevent the breaking up of Germany. As long as Germany is a coherent whole, there is more or less a balance of power in Europe, directly Germany breaks up that

<sup>1</sup> Stresemann attempted to give Germany the appearance of a democracy in order to gain the confidence of international opinion. He admitted it himself, towards the end of 1922, with disarming candour :

"In the tremendously difficult situation facing us now, let us at least be clear about one thing: the more we depend on the outside world the more we must regard the small thing as a small thing and the big thing as a big thing. I mean that we must regard our domestic policy purely as a means of obtaining foreign-political successes, and not as an end in itself."

balance disappears ; France remains in undisputed military and political control, based upon her army and upon her military alliances. Many of the arguments which were valid in 1914 against Germany are valid to-day against France. Indeed, this is an under-statement, for then the Triple Alliance was balanced by the Russo-French Alliance, to-day France and the Smaller Entente is balanced by nothing."<sup>1</sup>

As to the United States, whose friendship held the promise of large credits, its influence in Berlin was summed up by Lord d'Abernon thus :

"In all the more important developments in Germany during the post-war years, American influence has been decisive. Eliminate action taken on American advice, or in assumed agreement with American opinion, or in anticipation of American approval, and the whole course of policy would be altered "<sup>2</sup>

But while the Americans and British were doing their best to help Germany escape from the lamentable situation into which she had got herself through her policy of passive resistance, the German Government committed a gross blunder. In their blind hatred of President Wilson, they instructed the German Ambassador in Washington—Wiedfeldt—on February 2, 1924, not to associate himself with the national mourning ordered on the death of the President, and to abstain from any official manifestation of condolence. As a result, the German Embassy omitted even to fly its flag at half-mast. This provoked unfavourable comment in the American Press, and Stresemann, scared by the possible consequences of his clumsiness, changed the instruction, authorizing Wiedfeldt to lower the flag at the Embassy.

#### *Dissolution of the Reichstag—Death of Hugo Stinnes*

On March 13, the Reichstag was dissolved for manifesting a desire to revoke the decrees issued by the Government under its plenary powers. At the Congress of the People's Party, held in Hanover in the same month, Stresemann made an election speech, in the course of which he said :

"... The spirit of the National Assembly was not our spirit. . . . On that account we stood for and still stand for the old flag of the Reich. On that account we hold fast to the memory of our glorious army and our fleet that have now passed away, and of the pioneers of German

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. II., p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 18.

colonisation, whose civilising influence was greater than that of other nations that now dispute our right to any colonial activity."<sup>1</sup>

In an interview he gave to the *New York Times* on April 4, he made the specific statement: "... We regard the ultimate aim of our efforts as the establishment of a German popular monarchy."<sup>2</sup> Somewhat strange from a Minister of the Republic, though normal for a loyal friend of the ex-Crown Prince.

On April 10, Hugo Stinnes died. Stresemann, grieving over the loss of his party colleague and friend, presented this industrial magnate to the *Manchester Guardian* as a devoted friend of the proletariat, recalling by way of evidence that Stinnes had named one of his merchant ships after the trade union leader, Karl Legien. Unfortunately, this tit-bit proved not Stinnes's generosity, but Legien's opportunism. What actually happened was that on November 11, 1918, when the Revolution was at its peak, the industrialists and the Socialist trade unions met and signed an agreement promising each other mutual support in order to ensure the normal running of the factories. Heavy industry was represented by Stinnes, Voegler and Hugenberg, the trade unions by Karl Legien, Otto Húe and August Mueller. This armistice helped to save the industrialists from disaster. Stinnes retained a grateful memory of the event, and that was why, in 1922, he named one of his new ships after Legien, the others bearing such names as "Hindenburg," "Ludendorff," "Tirpitz," "Kirdorff" (Ruhr industrialist), "von Bayer" (chemical industrialist), and "Ballin" (Hamburg - Amerika Line). Stinnes had no prejudices when it came to business. "He sought allies wherever he could find them; for instance, he was one of the first to enter into close relations with the Soviet Republic and he fraternised with its leaders without concealment."<sup>3</sup>

### *The Dawes Plan*

Since America and Britain were interested in a resumption of economic and financial collaboration with the Reich, and France was ready to abandon Poincaré's intractable

<sup>1</sup> *Gustav Stresemann—His Diaries*, Vol. I., pp. 315-316.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>3</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann* (French Translation), Vol. I., p. 230



policy, it was no longer difficult to put an end to the Franco-German conflict arising from the Ruhr occupation. However, this demanded settlement of the Reparations question. An international committee of experts, headed by the American financier Dawes, set to work and published its report already on April 9, 1924. The plan embodied in it was accepted in August of the same year by all the interested Powers, including Germany, for which the Dawes Plan opened the door to foreign credits, as the Plan itself assured her of a loan of 800,000,000 marks gold. The Plan proposed settlement of the Reparations problem as follows: Germany to pay one billion marks gold during the first year, then gradually increasing annuities reaching two-and-a-half billions per annum in 1928-1929. The Plan provided certain guarantees in the form of international control of the German railways and of the operations of the Reichsbank.

When the Dawes Plan had been published and the German Government had made it known that it regarded the Plan as an acceptable basis for the rapid solution of the Reparations problem, Stresemann published an article in the *Zeit*—on April 20—indicating to his countrymen what foreign credits meant to Germany: "International indebtedness involves not only the usual slavery of debt, but the interest of the creditor nations in the debtor country."<sup>1</sup> This was only too true: the more foreign money Germany borrowed the more interested were the foreigners in her fate, doing everything in their power to make her strong and therefore solvent. Of course, the final result was somewhat different—Germany became strong yet insolvent. Thus Stresemann was probably right when, in the course of a Reichstag speech on June 6, 1924, he heaved this sigh of regret: "Ah, gentlemen, if we had only been a little more dependent on this capital during the war, perhaps the world would have had different ideas as to how the war must end!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gustav Stresemann—His Diaries*, Vol. I., p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann* (French translation), Vol. I., p. 241.

*The New Marx Government—  
Anti-Semitism among German Freemasons—  
“The National Idea is Superior . . .”*

After the Reichstag elections, which took place on May 4, 1924, Stresemann's People's Party tried first of all to create a coalition comprising all the bourgeois parties, the German Nationals among them. This attempt failed and on June 4 a new Government was formed by the same Chancellor—Marx—and based on the same parties: the People's Party, the Centre and the Democrats. Stresemann retained the portfolio of Foreign Affairs.

On June 26, Stresemann, who was a Freemason, wrote an indignant letter to Pastor K. Habicht, protesting against an anti-Government speech delivered at the Grand Lodge of the Three Spheres on St John's Day. This letter revealed the existence of a disquieting state of mind even among the Freemasons. “Nor can I allow it to be said,” wrote Stresemann, “that the men who exert a preponderating influence here are of non-German blood, and I cannot allow that this should have been done in the name of racialism, so that those present were under the impression that they were participating in an election meeting of the racialist party.”<sup>1</sup> Is the subsequent course of events to be wondered at, considering that already in 1924 Stresemann discerned racialist sympathies and anti-Semitic tendencies even among the Freemasons?

On July 26, 1924, Stresemann, in a newspaper article, paid homage to the memory of his political friend Ernst Bassermann, leader of the National Liberals during the war, who died in 1917. In this article he gave a character sketch of Bassermann which may be said to provide the key to the German enigma:

“Of these two ideas, the National and the Liberal, which he defended according to the circumstances, sometimes being treated as a reactionary because he voted with the Conservatives for increased military credits, and sometimes being chaffed by the Conservatives as a Southern Democrat because he supported a plan for social reform—of these two ideas it was the National idea that in his view was clearly superior.”<sup>2</sup>

There were always, in Germany, priests and pastors who

<sup>1</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann* (French translation), Vol. I., p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 259.

defended the rights of their Church and religious education, there were always Socialists who were ready to fight for the improvement of the workers' lot, and there were always Liberals who favoured social reform—but the National—not to say nationalist—idea was regarded by them as being above all other considerations.

*The London Protocol and its Consequences for Germany--  
The Reich and the League of Nations—"The Interest  
of the State"*

In August 1924 there was a Conference in London between the Allies and Germany to discuss the Dawes Plan. Chancellor Marx and Stresemann participated, their opposite numbers being Mr Ramsay Macdonald, the new British Premier, and M. Herriot, the French Premier, who had succeeded Poincaré after the elections that brought victory to the Left. The Germans went to London with the settled decision of accepting the Dawes Plan. That was why the Conference was a success, despite certain difficulties relating to the date of the Ruhr evacuation and to the control of German disarmament. The Dawes Plan was accepted, and the loan of 800,000,000 marks gold granted to Germany was several times oversubscribed in a very short time. Mr Parker Gilbert, the American financier, was appointed to supervise German finance during the currency of the Plan.

Germany gained a double advantage from the settlement of the Reparations problem: access to unlimited foreign loans, which succeeded each other at a rapid rate after the Dawes Loan, and liberation of the Ruhr, which was progressively evacuated during 1924 and 1925.

The London Protocol approving the Dawes Plan was initialed on August 16, and signed on August 30. Its execution demanded legislation that could only be passed by a two-thirds majority of the Reichstag. The Government majority was insufficient, so that it was necessary to secure the support of the Socialists and German Nationals. As regards the latter, their decision was facilitated by the fact that the Dawes Plan, of which the industrialists were to be the principal beneficiaries, had been accepted almost unanimously, on August 23, by the *Reichsverband* of

industry. On August 29 the Reichstag passed all the necessary laws by the required majority, thanks to the support of the German Nationals and the Socialists. The lure of foreign money had created a temporary "holy alliance" in the Reichstag.

There were now no further obstacles to the evacuation of the Ruhr and to the granting of foreign credits. At a luncheon held in Berlin on September 25, Mr Mitchell, President of the National City Bank of New York, assured Stresemann "that the Dawes Loan would cause three hundred thousand Americans to make propaganda for Germany, because they would be interested in her prosperity."<sup>1</sup> Mr Mitchell's reflection accorded with Stresemann's aim, which Baron von Rheinbaben interpreted as follows: "One must attract American capital and the interest of capitalist circles in America towards Germany, with a view to interesting Americans politically in Germany later on."<sup>2</sup>

The following day there was another luncheon, where Stresemann met Sir Philip Dawson, M.P., and Mr Patrick Hannon, M.P. The latter said that it was necessary that British and German industry, and particularly the iron and steel industries, should work together in better accord. Britain must give financial aid to German industry and take shares in German undertakings. It would then be possible to operate jointly in the world market. Britain greatly desired an economic *entente* with Germany, and that was why Mr Hannon and his friend, Sir Philip Dawson, had come to Berlin.<sup>3</sup>

On September 23, the German Government, with Ebert in the chair, decided to take another step to normalise Germany's position, declaring itself, in principle, in favour of Germany's entry into the League of Nations. This decision caused grave disquiet in Soviet circles, where it was feared that Germany was making common cause with France and Britain and loosening her relations with Russia, which had been of an intimate character since the conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo. However, these fears were not justified, because Stresemann had no intention of dropping the Soviet trump card, which he wanted to

<sup>1</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann* (French translation), Vol. I., p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> *Stresemann*, by Baron von Rheinbaben, 1928, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann* (French translation), Vol. I., p. 337.

play simultaneously with that of *rapprochement* with the West. Accordingly, he gave assurances to the Soviet Embassy in Berlin, allaying Russian apprehensions for the moment.

On October 11, at a "Volkspartei" Congress, Stresemann exalted the State in the following terms :

"When it is a matter of deciding what amount of work might be demanded of the individual, this question concerns not only the people affected, but must be settled for the benefit of the State and on the basis of moral considerations. The admirable thing about the old Germany was that she considered herself as a mediator and held it to be her duty to take into account the interest of the State first of all. The new Germany must have no other task!"<sup>1</sup>

It was such considerations that, in 1923, led to the abolition of the eight-hour working day and, about ten years later, to the deification of the State. At the same Congress, Stresemann said: "We are stripped of power and we must try to regain, little by little and by means of compromises, our rank as a Great Power."<sup>2</sup>

*Dissolution of the Reichstag and New Elections — Luther Government with German National Participation*

From the end of September there were conversations concerning the admission of the German Nationals into the Government. This was greatly desired by the People's Party, which was linked with the German Nationals not only by a common monarchist faith, but also by the fact that both parties, despite their different political nuances, represented the interests of industry and banking. The conversations produced no result, and Dr Marx was obliged to ask President Ebert to dissolve the Reichstag, which he did on October 20.

In the course of the electoral campaign, Stresemann again defined his policy: "Our foreign policy is in a tragic situation because there is no army to support it. . . . It is always the policy of force that prevails in the end; but when there is no force, you can still fight with ideas." (November 29, 1924.)<sup>3</sup>

The elections took place on December 7, 1924. On the

<sup>1</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann* (French translation), Vol. I., p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 349.

whole, there was little change in the physiognomy of the Reichstag. On December 15 the Marx Cabinet resigned, but as the formation of a new Government was meeting with difficulties, Dr Marx and his colleagues continued to conduct affairs until the beginning of 1925.

It was then that the German Nationals decided to participate in the Government. Chancellor Dr Marx withdrew, and his place was taken by Dr Luther (non-party, but gravitating towards the People's Party), who on January 15, 1925, formed a new Government in which all the bourgeois parties were represented: the German Nationals, the People's Party, the Centre and the Democrats. In 1923, at a difficult period for Germany, the principal portfolios had been entrusted to the Socialists. This time it was the turn of the German Nationals, who held the portfolios of the Interior (Schiele), Finance (von Schlieben), and National Economy (Neuhaus). Stresemann retained Foreign Affairs, and Dr Gessler the Reichswehr Ministry.

#### *Ebert Dies—Hindenburg Elected President*

However, soon after this the extent of Germany's evolution since 1918 was marked by another event. On February 28, 1925, President Ebert died. The man who had paralysed the Revolution disappeared from the scene. Stresemann was not far wrong when, in an article about the dead President, he held up a particular act of Ebert's as the symbol of his political activities—his decision, on August 11, 1924, to retain the Imperial Anthem, "Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles," as the National Anthem of Republican Germany. This decision provides a more revealing moral portrait of the first President of the Republic than anything else. "Germany above all else"—that was the Gospel of this Social Democratic leader.

Ebert's death posed the problem of succession. The different political parties put forward their respective candidates. The first ballot took place on March 29, 1925, and produced the following results:

Jarrès, Mayor of Duisburg (German National	
and People's Party candidate)	... 10,787,870
Braun, Prussian Premier (Socialist candidate)	7,836,676

Ex Chancellor Marx (Centre) ... ..	3,988,659
Thaelmann (Communist) ... ..	1,885,778
Hellpach (Democrat) ... ..	1,582,414
Held, Bavarian Premier (Bavarian Catholic Party)	990,036
Ludendorff (Racialist) ... ..	210,968

Ludendorff's candidature foundered in ridicule. The prestige of the former dictator of Germany had been irremediably injured through his own fault, as his participation in the trifling Munich putsch and his enthusiasm for a so-called neo-Pagan religion. The result of the ballot was only a confirmation of his political eclipse.

Held withdrew. The Socialists decided to withdraw the candidature of Braun and to support Marx, though the latter represented the Right wing of the Centre and did not conceal his antipathy for the Socialists. This reflects the degree of their weakness; their opportunism was leading them to support a distinctly reactionary candidate. The Communists, on the other hand, upheld the candidature of Thaelmann.

The German National and People's Parties, on their part, made a theatrical gesture, withdrawing the candidature of Jarrès and putting forward the aged Marshal von Hindenburg, former Generalissimo. Hindenburg at first hesitated by reason of his advanced age (he was then 77), but when Admiral von Tirpitz went to Hanover, where he was living, and appealed to his patriotism, he accepted.

Thus at the second ballot the German worker was faced with the very embarrassing dilemma of choosing between a general utterly devoted to the old régime and to Prussian militarist ideals, and a reactionary who had abolished the eight-hour day and meant to serve only the interests of the big capitalists. The Socialists opted for Marx—though they did not seem to know why, for seven years later they were to vote for Hindenburg.

The second ballot took place on April 27, 1925. Hindenburg was elected by 14,655,766 votes against 13,761,615 for Marx and 1,951,151 for Thaelmann. Thus the Presidency of the Republic went to the most popular man of the old régime. As one German newspaper ironically observed: "The Republic is the continuation of the Empire by other means."

The popular vote had carried to the head of the Reich a man who had formulated the program of the future thus: "Melancholy meditation is useless. That which was German must become German again. Bear that in mind, German youth." (In his book: *Was wir verloren haben*, Berlin, 1920.)

Hindenburg never ceased to be haunted by the idea of a *revanche*. This, for instance, is what he said on September 19, 1927, at a meeting of the Stahlhelm, of which he was an honorary member: "You are all young men, and you've played the 'March of the Entry of Paris' well. But I hope that one day you are going to play this military march where you should—at the place where I was in 1870."

When, on May 11, 1925, he left his residence in Hanover to occupy his new post in Berlin, he was met at Hanover railway station by Noske, the President of the Province, who was thus for the last time manifesting his unshakable loyalty to the leaders of the Imperial Army.

If Stresemann knew his Germans, it must be assumed that Hindenburg's election was in accordance with the wishes of the people. This is what he had said in this connection on October 17, 1922: "The truth is the German people cannot stand a President in a high hat. They think he looks peculiar at a review. They must have a military uniform with plenty of orders."<sup>1</sup> In 1925 they were able to elect a man whose uniform was resplendent with decorations.

Stresemann was very much afraid that Hindenburg's election might compromise his policy by resuscitating doubt and suspicion in the Allied countries. But foreign public opinion received the news without concern and continued to trust the German Republic.

### *Germans Take Initiative for Western Pact*

The year 1925 has rightly been called the year of Locarno. Stresemann, aided by his State Secretary, von Schubert, who towards the end of 1924 had taken the place of von Maltzan, now Ambassador at Washington, at the beginning of 1925 worked out a memorandum advancing the idea of a Rhineland Pact. The idea in itself was not

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. II., p. 115.



new, for a similar suggestion had already been made by Chancellor Cuno in a speech he delivered in Hamburg on December 31, 1922, when he said :

" . . . we have informed the French Government, through the medium of a third Power (the United States) that Germany is ready, in common with France and the other great Powers interested in the Rhine, to undertake a solemn obligation towards a trustee in the shape of a great Power not interested in the Rhine, that these Powers should refrain from attacking each other, unless specially authorised by a referendum, for a generation. . . "

The French Government had rejected this offer, because it doubted its sincerity, seeing that the Reich Government was limiting it to thirty years and was reserving the possibility of recourse to war through a plebiscite.

Cuno's proposal had been forgotten amidst the events of 1923. Stresemann, encouraged by Lord d'Abernon, was now reviving it.<sup>1</sup> To judge by Lord d'Abernon's memoirs, he even took an active part in drafting the memorandum, which the German Government at the beginning of 1925 transmitted to the principal Allied Governments. (On January 20, to London, on February 9, to Paris, on February 23, to Brussels, and on February 24, to Rome.)

These were the suggestions presented in the German memorandum :

"Germany might, for instance, announce her readiness to conclude a pact by which all the Powers interested in the Rhine, and especially England, France, Italy and Germany, should solemnly pledge themselves for a considerable period, later to be determined, not to make war upon each other. . . . It might be continued with a far-reaching arbitration treaty between Germany and France, such as has latterly been concluded between various European Powers. Germany is also ready to conclude such treaties, which provide for a peaceful settlement of juridical and political conflicts, with any other State.

"For Germany, moreover, a pact would be acceptable that expressly guaranteed the present territorial situation on the Rhine. Such a pact might run somewhat as follows : that the States interested in the Rhine mutually pledged themselves to maintain inviolate the present frontiers

<sup>1</sup>Stresemann had a particular reason for acting quickly for he knew that, as early as the end of 1924, the British Foreign Secretary had begun to work for an offer of a British guarantee to France and Belgium. If Great Britain and France were to renew their former collaboration, it would be very difficult to play off one against the other. "Chamberlain has never been our friend"—wrote Stresemann in his Diary—"His first act was to attempt to restore the old Entente through a three-power alliance of England, France and Belgium, directed against Germany. German diplomacy faced a catastrophic situation." The offer of a tripartite pact aimed at preventing such a development by imposing on Great Britain the role of an impartial partner both of France and of Germany.

on the Rhine, and that they further, both in common and individually, guarantee the fulfilment of this obligation ; and that finally, they will regard any transaction that conflicts with this obligation as their common and special concern. In the same sense the Treaty States included in this pact could guarantee the fulfilment of the obligation to demilitarise the Rhineland which Germany undertook in Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles ”

These German suggestions contained the germ of all the principal provisions of the Locarno Treaty. What Germany proposed in February 1925, was accepted by the interested Powers in October of the same year. But what was Germany's real proposal ? It was that a distinction should be made between her Western and Eastern frontiers, or in other words that European security should be divided into two watertight compartments. The German Government realized that for the time being (to use Stresemann's words) it was impossible to destroy the Versailles Treaty as a whole. It therefore concentrated on the question of the Eastern frontiers, leaving the other problems in abeyance until a Germany once more armed to the teeth was in a position to settle them.

### *Stresemann's Real Aims*

What were the immediate aims of Reich foreign policy ? Stresemann indicated them quite frankly in a letter he wrote to the ex-Crown Prince on September 7, 1925, in which he explained the reasons that obliged him to accept the Rhineland Pact and try to bring Germany into the League of Nations. Here are the most interesting passages of this revealing letter :

“ In my opinion there are three great tasks that confront German foreign policy in the more immediate future <sup>1</sup>

“ In the first place the solution of the Reparations question in a sense tolerable for Germany, and the assurance of peace, which is an essential premise for the recovery of our strength

“ Secondly, the protection of Germans abroad, those 10 to 12 millions of our kindred who now live under a foreign yoke in foreign lands.

“ The third great task is the readjustment of our Eastern frontiers ; the recovery of Danzig, the Polish Corridor, and a correction of the frontier of Upper Silesia.

“ In the background stands the union with German Austria, although I am quite clear that this not merely brings no advantage to Germany, but seriously complicates the problem of the German Reich

"If we want to secure these aims, we must concentrate on these tasks."

At the beginning of his letter Stresemann observed that the aims he was indicating were only the immediate aims. He was prudent enough not to reveal the others—those of the more distant future, though he may have confided them to the ex-Crown Prince by word of mouth, for he concluded his letter as follows :

"I beg Your Royal Highness to allow me to confine myself to these brief indications, and I would also ask you kindly to view this letter in the light of the fact that I am compelled to use the greatest reserve in everything I say. If Your Royal Highness could give me an opportunity for a quiet talk about these matters that will soon come up urgently for decision, I am gladly available at any time."

In August 1924, Stresemann accepted the Dawes Plan as a permanent solution of the Reparations problem. A year later he already had in mind its revision in Germany's favour. As he put it in the above-mentioned letter :

"The burden of Reparations laid upon us by the Dawes Plan will probably be unendurable by 1927. We shall then have to call for a new conference for a fresh estimate of German capacity to pay."

And this was at a time when Germany's creditors were delighted to have permanently settled the Reparations difficulties by means of an amicable agreement with the Reich. At the same time, Stresemann was honest enough to acknowledge, in the same letter, that Germany's Reparations burden was not so heavy as the burden of war debts which the victors, Britain and France, had to bear :

"A comparison of the 2½ milliards which is the maximum sum of what we have to pay, with the average of more than 4 milliards which our opponents have to pay as interest of their War Debt, may serve to remind us that the enemy is, from the point of view of taxation, not less heavily burdened than we ourselves."

Stresemann also explained to the ex-Crown Prince how he proposed to make use of Geneva :

"Our anxiety on behalf of Germans abroad is an argument in favour of our joining the League . . . Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Jugoslavia and Rumania, who are all bound by international treaties to take care of their minority population, *i.e.* more especially the German minorities, would not so disgracefully ignore their obligations if they knew that Germany could bring all these derelictions before the League. Moreover, all the questions that lie so close to German hearts, as for instance War

Guilt, General Disarmament, Danzig, the Saar, etc., are matters for the League of Nations, and a skilful speaker at a plenary session of the League may make them very disagreeable for the Entente."

In other words, Germany intended to make the question of German minorities in every corner of Europe into an open sore, thereby on the one hand establishing the *cadres* of her Fifth Column in the neighbouring countries, and on the other, recruiting foreign sympathy for a revision of her frontiers by unceasing agitation concerning the minorities. It must be admitted that this plan was in fact carried out with masterly skill.

### *Minorities Campaign of the Weimar Republic*

We shall digress here briefly to explain the significance of the Weimar Republic's minorities campaign. According to the German experts, there were approximately twenty million Germans outside the frontiers of the Reich and Austria.<sup>1</sup> The most important concentrations were in Eastern and South Eastern Europe and in the United States, where the German inhabitants were estimated to number eight millions.<sup>2</sup> On the advice of Professor J. W. Mannhardt, of Marburg,<sup>3</sup> the Republic recognised the need of treating the problem of foreign domiciled Germans as a separate branch of the social sciences. From 1925, special courses on the subject were held at the Universities of Marburg, Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin. The Diets of Prussia (November 13, 1925), Wuerttemberg and Hesse recommended to their respective Governments to grant subsidies to the scientists who wanted to study this problem. Two scientific institutes exclusively devoted to it were already in existence. One of them was "Das deutsche Ausland-institut," which was founded in 1917, at Stuttgart, and published a fortnightly called *Der Auslandsdeutsche*, as well as books bearing the words "*Ausland und Heimat*" as the publisher's imprint. So well organized was this Institute that von Bohle, the Hitlerite leader of the foreign domiciled Germans, invited their services in establishing a special department for such Germans at the Ministry of Foreign

<sup>1</sup> Dr Hermann Ruediger, *Das Buch vom deutschen Volkstum*, Stuttgart, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Hugo Grothe, *Kleines Handwörterbuch des Grenz-und- Auslands-Deutschtum*, Berlin, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> J. W. Mannhardt, *Grenz-und Auslandsdeutschum als Lehrgegenstand*, Jena, 1926

Affairs, while Stuttgart, where the Institute had its headquarters, was dubbed by Hitler as "the city of foreign domiciled Germans." The other Institute was called "Institut fuer Ausland - Kunde, Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtum," and was established in Leipzig in 1914.

To grasp the Weimar Republic's, and later the Third Reich's interest in the problem of foreign domiciled Germans, it is necessary to know the content attributed by the German experts to the term, "Auslandsdeutsche." They interpreted it as comprising five categories:

1. German citizens of German States independent of the Reich, that is, of Austria and Danzig. Here the aim of the research was *Anschluss* to the Reich.

2. "Binnendeutsche" — the populations of German descent of Switzerland, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein.

3. "Grenzdeutsche" — the German minorities in the countries adjacent to Germany (France, Belgium, Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc.).

4. "Insel- und Streudeutsche" — Germans domiciled in other European countries (as Rumania, Hungary, Jugoslavia, the Baltic countries, Russia).

5. "Ueberseedutsche" — the overseas Germans (particularly those of the United States, Latin America and South Africa).

All Germans of whatever category were expected not only to cultivate the national language and spirit, but also to serve the political interests of their country of origin. The German scientists went even further, claiming that the Reich had a moral right to all the territories where there were large groups of people of German origin, and even to territories that were under the influence of German culture. The idea of the "deutscher Kulturboden" was launched in 1926 by Albrecht Penck, a Professor of Geography, in a book entitled *Der deutsche Volks- und Kulturboden*. Another German expert, Hugo Grothe, wrote:

"The term cultural Germans covers all persons who in their daily lives use German as an auxiliary language besides their mother tongue and frequently write in German, having been educated in German schools, although they belong to another race or linguistic group. This manifests a desire on their part to belong to the German nation from the cultural point of view."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Handwoerterbuch des Grenz-und Auslandsdeutschtums.*

The organization of the Germans living abroad was directed by various associations under the control of the Reich Government. The most important was the "*Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland*," founded in 1908. This association took an interest in all persons of German origin, but particularly in the young. It subsidised a great many German schools abroad (9,200 in 1930), and operated through newspapers, libraries, artistic undertakings and sports organizations that frequently were nothing but camouflaged espionage and sabotage organizations. This powerful association, which after 1933 changed its name to "*Volksbund fuer die Deutschen im Ausland*," published the following periodicals: *Der Volksdeutsche* (from 1930), *Die Rolandblaetter* and *Jung Roland* (from 1929), and *Der deutsche Volkskalender* (from 1934). President Hindenburg on June 1, 1930, wrote to this association: "The '*Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland*' is entitled to claim the merit of having been the first, twenty years ago, to uphold the idea of the ethnical unity of all Germans even beyond the political frontiers."

Another important association was the "*Bund der Auslandsdeutschen*," which was founded on August 18, 1919, in Berlin. The aim of this association was to defend the interests of persons of German origin before the governments, parliaments and administrations of countries whose citizens they were. In 1928, the association had thirty-five branches in Germany and abroad. Its organ was the *Auslandswarte*, which was started in 1920.

The "*Deutsch-Evangelische im Ausland*," founded in Leipzig in 1919, and the "*Reichsverband fuer die katholischen Auslandsdeutschen*," founded in October 1918, occupied themselves with foreign domiciled Germans under the pretext of religious welfare.

The minority organizations in the foreign countries were in close contact with these associations and institutes in the Reich. The Weimar Republic carried its solicitude so far that it spent large sums in subsidising banks and co-operatives belonging to Polish, Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Hungarian, Yugoslav, etc., citizens of German origin, so that these banks and co-operatives were able to grant more favourable terms than were customary in these countries. This was designed to ensure economic prosperity for the

Germans who were foreign citizens, thus linking them to the Reich by a financial interest. From 1919, the chief treasurer of these subsidies from the coffers of the Weimar Reich was a man named Max Winckler, a Deputy of the Prussian Diet, member of the Democratic Party, and a confidant of both Hindenburg and Stresemann. From 1933, this same Winckler became Himmler's confidant, and in 1940 head of the "Haupttreuhandstelle-Ost," the organization charged with the expropriation of the Poles.

By raising the minority problem, Stresemann also meant to raise the question of frontiers. In his letter to the ex-Crown Prince he mentioned the figure of twelve millions, the same as was invoked by Hitler as his justification to extend the frontiers of the Reich in 1938 and 1939. When he set it down, Stresemann must have been thinking at least of the Polish territories (which he mentioned expressly), the Sudetenland and Austria. Thus Stresemann's immediate aim was precisely the same as that which was realized by Hitler in 1938 and 1939—the acquisition of Western Poland, the industrial regions of Czechoslovakia, and the whole of Austria. Hitler's aim was the immediate cause of the present war. But Stresemann, while pursuing the same aim, managed to bag the Nobel Peace Prize *en passant*!

Of course, Stresemann was too clever a politician not to realize that no country would give up its national territory or its independence of its own accord. As he himself said: "Nobody is going to give up his property of his own free will." How, then, were Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria to be made to yield to the demands of the Reich? The only way was to isolate them politically and compel them to face the Reich alone. And in order to achieve this, Germany had to be on good terms with Britain, France and the United States, and try to dissipate the sympathy of these three countries for the prospective victims of the Reich.

*"We Must Get the Stranglehold off our Neck"*

There were people in the Western countries who deluded themselves with the hope that German *rapprochement* with the West would entail abandonment of the policy of Rapallo and that Germany would then join in an anti-

Soviet policy. Perhaps it was this hope that impelled those Western diplomats and financiers who were so active in their pro-German policy. In any case, Stresemann in his letter to the ex-Crown Prince declared that Germany could not agree to such a policy, but added discreetly: "My contention that we are not selling ourselves to the West by joining the League is a matter on which I would gladly enlarge to Your Royal Highness in a personal talk."

On July 17, Stresemann frankly observed that his resort to foreign gold was not to affect friendship with Russia:

"To the question whether the combination between England and France and ourselves might not turn its face against Russia, I would give this negative reply: if we do not succeed in co-operating with the financially powerful States, America, for instance, which in these questions stands on the side of England and France, I forebode an economic collapse in Germany, the consequences of which cannot be predicted. For we have no more accumulated capital in Germany with which to carry on our business. On this account I also ask that the opportunity may be seized to get into political touch also with the dispensers of money and gold. That does not exclude co-operation with Russia."<sup>1</sup>

Later, Germany used part of the funds so liberally supplied to her by the Western capitalists to support with government credits and guarantees, trade between herself and the country which those same capitalists considered as their enemy.

Two days later, Stresemann made this entry in his diary:

"In the last few weeks came, too, the conversations between the potentates of capital, Strong (from the Federal Reserve Bank), Montague Norman and Schacht. It seems as though a kind of Anglo-American-German Capital Trust were in process of formation, naturally presupposing the establishment of a Security Pact. We are in urgent need of these milliards."<sup>2</sup>

In Stresemann's view the Locarno policy was calculated to create favourable conditions for the further whittling down of the Versailles Treaty—the abolition of inter-Allied control of German armaments and the speeding up of the evacuation of the occupied territories. This was an important point, for the presence of Allied troops on the Rhine kept Germany paralysed in the military sense. The rest of the world

<sup>1</sup> *Gustav Stresemann—His Diaries*, Vol. II., p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 142.



realized this later—too late, alas!—when after the withdrawal of the last Allied soldier from the Rhine in 1930, Germany openly and brazenly entered upon the path of imperialism. Stresemann wanted to free himself of this Allied hold: "The most important thing for the first task of German policy mentioned above is the liberation of German soil from any occupying force. We must get the stranglehold off our neck. On that account, German policy, as Metternich said of Austria, no doubt, after 1809, will be one of *finesse* ('*finassieren*') and the avoidance of great decisions."<sup>1</sup> This "*finassieren*" is priceless, for this word, which Stresemann used in the course of a friendly exchange of views with the ex-Crown Prince, throws a light on the basis of his policy, that is, the policy of the Republic before the advent of Hitler. Indeed, Hitler himself also resorted to "*finassieren*" with foreign countries until March 1938, when, feeling strong enough, he threw off the mask and gave the order for the March on Vienna.

The Dawes Plan in 1924 opened the way for foreign loans, without which Germany could scarcely have rebuilt her industrial—and therefore also her military—power. The Treaty of Locarno, in turn, estranged the West from the Eastern and Central European countries, and created a favourable atmosphere for the more rapid evacuation of the occupied zones.

The Nationalists failed to grasp the *finesse* of Stresemann's policy, favouring a more reckless policy. Thus the Foreign Minister had continual difficulties with the German Nationals, but neither Hindenburg nor the Reichswehr placed any obstacles in his way, for they understood the trend and value of his policy.

When the German memorandum of February 1925 came up for discussion, the French at first tried to bring Poland and Czechoslovakia also into the proposed security pact, but British discouragement, as well as the after-effects of war exhaustion and financial difficulties arising from the war finally caused them to give up the struggle and agree to the German thesis to confine the settlement to the Rhineland question. At the same time, the French realized how dangerous it was to Europe to leave the problem of Eastern security in abeyance. For instance,

<sup>1</sup> The letter to the ex-Crown Prince (September 7, 1925).

on March 16, 1925, the French Ambassador said to Stresemann: "The Great War had not originated in the capitals of the Great Powers, but in Belgrade, and there was therefore a fear that a fresh war might arise out of a conflict in Eastern Europe."<sup>1</sup> It did—and in Danzig.

### *Locarno*

The Locarno Conference was prepared by a group of jurists, who met in London from September 1 till the 5th of that month. It included Sir Cecil Hurst, M. Fromageot (French jurist), and Dr Gaus, a German Legal Adviser, who was then a close collaborator of Stresemann, and later became the confidant of Adolf Hitler.

A few days later Stresemann again mentioned in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* the problem of German minorities and of the Eastern frontiers as the immediate aims of his policy. But this time he went a little further, and revealed another somewhat different aim as well:

"It must also consist in backing Germany's claim to colonial activity and to acquire colonial possessions. She must, finally, stand out for the national right of self-determination, which, in the question of the union of German Austria with Germany, has been treated with unexampled cynicism by the Allies, and stultified"<sup>2</sup>

Even Stresemann, usually so prudent, was unable to contain his German forthrightness, advancing two demands calculated directly to disquiet the Western Powers. On another occasion he stressed that the idea of Germany's annexation of Austria had an ardent supporter in Herr Loebe, the Socialist Reichstag Speaker; and on May 28, 1925, he noted down in his diary:

"One must keep one's eyes open to prevent Austria going the way of the Economic Confederation of the Danube, which would merely be the first step to the restoration of the Hapsburg Empire."<sup>3</sup>

Thus Austria was to be kept isolated from the other Danubian countries, so that she might all the more easily fall a prey to the Reich. Apropos colonies, about which he talked with Chamberlain and Briand at Locarno, he observed not without cynicism:

"At this Chamberlain was silent; he was inwardly quite prepared to resign the French colonies to us, just as Briand was certainly prepared to resign those of his English allies."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

This observation shows that the Germans had a poor opinion of Allied solidarity.

The Locarno Treaty was initialed by the representatives of the Powers on October 25, 1925. It comprised the Rhineland Pact, which guaranteed the frontiers between Germany on the one hand and France and Belgium on the other, and contained an undertaking by these three countries never to resort to war, the undertaking being guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy. The Pact also confirmed Germany's obligation under the Versailles Treaty to respect the provision relating to the demilitarised zone on the left bank of the Rhine and on a strip of territory fifty kilometres wide on the right bank. In addition, Germany initialed bilateral arbitration agreements with her four neighbours: France, Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

France, in order to adapt her earlier obligations of alliance to the Rhineland Pact, signed mutual aid treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The differentiation between Western and Eastern security had thus been consummated.<sup>1</sup> The aim indicated in the German memorandum of February 1925, had been achieved. One might ask whether, when initialing the Rhineland Pact, with its guarantee of the French frontiers,

<sup>1</sup> Here are two very interesting opinions of G. Stresemann's on the subject of his Western policy. The first was given on April 20, 1925, in an article written by Stresemann for the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*:

"Affairs in the East are by no means settled. As soon as Russia decides whether she is prepared to remain permanently within these frontiers or not, and if she raises the question of Poland and the Baltic States, then at this moment a new era in European history will open up. . . . If we correctly understand the initiative of the German Government, the aim of its proposals is to prevent the formation of a new entente against Germany envisaged in the Three-Power Pact of Great Britain, France and Belgium, under Chamberlain's leadership, to deprive the Allied Powers of the excuse to keep the Rhineland indefinitely occupied on the ground that Germany had been guilty of failures in the disarmament provisions . . . and to tread the path of Germany's growth and consolidation with a view to securing the affiliations of German districts in the East at a later date. . . . It is true that British statesmen have said that Germany has agreed to seek a modification of her Eastern frontiers by peaceable means only. If anything is difficult to understand it is the indignant excitement this declaration has caused in a certain section of the German press; surely Germany's statesmen are not to be suspected of such a lack of diplomacy as to notify the Entente in advance of any intention of securing changes on Germany's Eastern frontiers by means of war?"

The second was expressed in a letter written by Stresemann in 1925 to the German Ambassador von Maltzan:

"Our policy of offering the Entente Powers a Security Pact was undoubtedly correct. . . . It broke up the Entente and opened up new possibilities for us in the East."

Stresemann had forgotten, in his heart of hearts, the following passage from a speech he had made on April 13, 1919, at the People's Party Congress in Jena :

"... This Alsace, and considerable parts of Lorraine, are German regions and their inhabitants are of German blood. Though the tricolor flies from Strasburg Cathedral, that imposing building was born of the German spirit and has nothing in common with the French spirit; it was there that one of the greatest geniuses Germany has given to the world first experienced the great inspiration of German architecture. All this bears the impress of the German character and is animated by the German spirit. That is why we shall never forget that Alsace-Lorraine is German, that it will always belong to us in spirit, and that it must be our task to preserve this spiritual patrimony for Germany."

The coming into force of the Locarno agreements was subject to Germany's adherence to the League of Nations. But Germany wanted to enter the League only on condition that she would not be obliged to participate in any sanctions that might involve her in difficulties with Russia. She wanted to avoid even the shadow of a suspicion that her Western policy was directed against Russia. The other signatory Powers allayed her apprehensions by conveying to Stresemann on October 25, 1925, a collective Note giving such an elastic interpretation to the League Covenant that Germany was in a position to show the Russians that her new orientation was in no way directed against them.

The initialing of the Locarno Treaty caused a storm in a teacup in Germany. The German Nationals, though represented in the Government, and though their Ministers had authorized Chancellor Luther and Stresemann to go to Locarno and initial the Treaty, were perturbed, for they failed to understand that recognition of the Western frontiers—which was in any case worth no more than the paper it was written on—was an indispensable condition of the long-range foreign policy. In October the Party withdrew its Ministers from the Government.

On December 14 Stresemann made a speech defending his policy, and demonstrating to the German Nationals the need for "*finassieren*" by the example of the blunders of Bethmann-Hollweg :

"We must defend ourselves against the charge of War Guilt and we are doing so. But what am I to reply to the Belgians when they say : 'Your Chancellor himself admitted it from the tribune of the Reichstag.' I am defeated : I cannot contend against that document which has been

before the world since August 4. I don't think there has been any nation in history that would have managed their business in that fashion. When Frederick the Great began the first Silesian War, he marched through Saxony, and some historians have questioned whether that was not a breach of neutrality. But before he put his troops in motion, all the courts of Europe had received his memorandum on his right of transit—not his excuses for the breach of Saxon neutrality. That is what is called policy!"<sup>1</sup>

The Reichstag debate on the Locarno Treaty took place in November. The Reichstag approved it against the votes of the German Nationals. On December 1 Luther and Stresemann went to London to sign the Treaty, jointly with the representatives of the other Powers.

While the German Nationals protested against Locarno and withdrew from the Government, a former Imperial Chancellor, who could not be accused of lacking either in nationalist sentiment or in political perspicacity, hastened to congratulate Stresemann on his achievement. It was Prince von Buelow, who in December 1925 wrote a warmly worded letter to Stresemann, which among other things contained the following: "Since our collapse and the shameful Peace of Versailles, you have laid the first stone for peaceful reconstruction. . . . Now time is on our side."<sup>2</sup> He was right—from then on time was on Germany's side in the rebuilding of her power.

*Evacuation of the Ruhr and the First Rhineland Zone—  
Stresemann's Heroes: Frederick the Great and Bismarck*

While the Ruhr was evacuated by August 25, 1925, as a reward for Germany's acceptance of the Dawes Plan, the initialing of the Locarno Treaty brought the Reich another evacuation—that of the Cologne zone, which was carried out between December 1, 1925 and January 31, 1926. The Rhineland area occupied under the Versailles Treaty had been divided into three zones, of which the first was to be evacuated five years after the coming into force of the Treaty, the second after ten years, and the third after fifteen years, that is, in 1935. However, as the occupation was imposed on Germany to guarantee the execution of the Peace Treaty, the Treaty contained a clause providing for deferment of evacuation in case Germany failed to

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 241.

carry out certain provisions. In the course of 1925 there was an exchange of views between Britain, France and Germany on the debatable question whether the Reich had faithfully carried out the disarmament clauses and whether she was therefore entitled to claim evacuation of the first Rhineland zone, that of Cologne. The French accused Germany of having sabotaged the Treaty by maintaining the High Command and General Staff of the Reichswehr, increasing police effectives, giving them military training and lodging them in barracks, thus making them into a veritable second Reichswehr, and also by increasing the production of war material, etc., etc. All these accusations were only too true. But the British and French Governments were in such a hurry to sign the Locarno Treaty that they did not insist, and after a protracted and sterile discussion they allowed the German thesis that the evacuation time-limits had begun to mature. Consequently, the Cologne zone had to be evacuated.

In 1925, while international opinion was beginning to regard Stresemann as the greatest pacifist, he himself never ceased to enjoin upon his countrymen, by word of mouth as well as in writing, that they must seek their inspiration in the acts of Frederick the Great and Bismarck. Yet Frederick the Great meant the conquest of Silesia from Austria and the Partitions of Poland; while Bismarck meant the wars of conquest against Denmark, Austria and France, the initiation of the policy of extermination against the Poles, and war against Socialism.

"Frederick the Great," said Stresemann, "is for us the embodiment of that ancient Prussian spirit on which is based the categorical imperative of duty (poor Kant—being linked with Frederick the Great!) The King . . . in whom the idea of the State overshadowed all else . . . is a figure more suited than any other to a nation that is labouring under heavy burdens. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

In an article he published on December 25, 1923, Stresemann had written:

"Prince Bismarck, after his political labours had been crowned by the unification of the German peoples, was, until the end of his life, haunted by the nightmare of coalitions, and suffered from his foreboding of the dangers that threatened his countrymen. His statesmanship, that secured the peace of Europe for half a century, forms a shining testimony to the German love of peace."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 262.

The Danes, Austrians and French might have been somewhat surprised by this presentation of Bismarck as an apostle of European peace. But Stresemann pretended to forget the wars of 1864, 1866 and 1871, all instigated by this iron "pacifist."

If anyone at that time had dared to call the attention of a world intoxicated by the spirit of Locarno to these eulogies of Frederick and Bismarck, he would probably have been treated as a spoil sport, just as in the pre-Munich days it was bad taste to recall the contents of *Mein Kampf*. Europe did not wish to know. She was sick of war and insisted on living in a fool's paradise.

*Resignation of Luther Government--The Idea of  
Presidential Dictatorship--Luther's New Government*

On December 5, after the signing of the Locarno Treaty, Chancellor Luther tendered the resignation of his Government to President Hindenburg who, however, requested the Ministers to continue with the conduct of affairs until a new government was formed. It was at this time that the German Nationals, whose withdrawal from the Government was the cause of the crisis, first conceived the idea of a dictatorship by Hindenburg. A trace of this is contained in an entry in Stresemann's diary, dated December 16:

"At the meeting of the Association of German Iron and Steel Manufacturers, Herr Dr Reichert (Member of the Reichstag, German National, Business Manager of the Association), after the servants had left the room, made the following statement about the formation of the Government: 'The Great Coalition would probably not succeed. The central government to follow would possess neither a majority, nor sufficient authority. Nothing else remained but to govern on the basis of Article 48, and not to summon the Reichstag until there are thirteen months in the year.'"<sup>1</sup>

The other industrialists present approved of the plan and decided to send a delegation to Hindenburg in order to persuade him to carry it out. However, this plan of Presidential dictatorship was premature because Germany needed both money and political concessions from the Western countries, and she could not have either unless she preserved a democratic and constitutional façade. It

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 364.

was carried out only from 1930 onwards, first by Bruening, then by von Papen and Schleicher.

Meanwhile, Hindenburg elected to let the parliamentary régime continue ; and as the German Nationals preferred to remain in clamorous opposition, he re-appointed Dr Luther as Chancellor on January 20, 1926. Luther again relied on a coalition of the bourgeois parties : the People's Party, Centre and Democrats. The Chancellor's most important collaborators were : Stresemann, Foreign Affairs, Gessler, Reichswehr, Dr Brauns (Centre), Labour, Dr Curtius (People's Party), National Economy (and after Stresemann's death in 1929, Foreign Minister), and Dr Marx, Justice.

*The Question of the Flag—Luther Followed by Marx*

In 1926 the principal questions of home policy were the expropriation of the former reigning families and the national flag, and the principal event of foreign policy, Germany's entry into the League of Nations.

On May 5 the Government by unanimous decision promulgated a Presidential decree ordering the Reich's diplomatic and consular representations abroad thenceforth to fly the flag of the merchant navy beside the official Republican flag. This requires an explanation. The National Assembly at Weimar, when fixing the official colours of the Republic (black-red-gold), decided, on a Democratic motion, to retain the former Imperial colours (black-white-red) for the merchant navy. Thus the Government decision mentioned above meant that Germany's representations abroad were thenceforth to display the Imperial colours beside the Republican ones. Stresemann had wanted to introduce this measure already in 1924 and had actually obtained the consent of President Ebert, but the matter was postponed through the latter's death. Now the necessary decree was passed by Hindenburg. The homage thus paid by the Republican Government to the Empire aroused protests on the part of the Centre, the Democrats and the Socialists, and on May 12 the Reichstag passed a vote of censure against the Government by 176 votes against 146. The Chancellor and his Cabinet were obliged to resign, but a few days later



(May 17) the same Cabinet reappeared, with Dr Marx as Chancellor.

The previous Chancellor, Dr Luther, was not in the Government. Later, in 1929, he joined Dr Stresemann's People's Party. In 1928 he formed the "*Bund zur Erneuerung des Reiches*," whose program he defined as follows :

"The rallying of all those desiring to collaborate in the inner re-birth of the Reich by strengthening the authority of the Reich, in the simplification and cheapening of the administration, and in fostering the ideology with which the German people were restored by Freiherr von Stein in an earlier emergency."

On April 3, 1930, Luther replaced Dr Schacht as Governor of the Reichsbank, to be in his turn replaced by Schacht on March 16, 1933. On March 21, 1933, this Chancellor of the Locarno era was appointed Ambassador in Washington by Hitler.

### *The Problem of the Estates of the Former Reigning Families*

Another domestic preoccupation in 1926 concerned the estates of the former reigning families. There was a great deal of noise in connection with this problem—speeches, newspaper articles, popular votes and Reichstag debates. But from the democratic point of view this mountain of agitation produced only a mouse.

After the Revolution of November, 1918, the property of the princes was not confiscated. The Governments of the individual German States tried to make composition with their respective dynasties. A few Governments, as the Prussian Government, sequestered the property of the princes for the time being, but only in order to keep it secure pending negotiations.

During the years 1919-1925 legislative or contractual settlements of the property issue between the State and the princes were effected in most German States, as in Anhalt, Baden, Bavaria, Brunswick, Reuss Ae., L., Reuss J. L., Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach, Saxony-Meiningen and Waldeck. Settlements were effected in other States as well, but later disputes arose between the parties, partly

concerning the validity of agreements, but particularly by reason of the demand of the princes, in cases of financial settlement, for an increased valuation owing to the inflation. This happened, *e.g.*, in Saxony-Altenburg, Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Oldenburg.

In some States, particularly in Prussia and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, no final settlement of the property issue had taken place up to the end of 1926.

The princes in many cases demanded colossal valuation increases, and these were mostly awarded by the courts, which generally ruled in favour of the princes. This led, in the autumn of 1925, to a proposal on the part of the German Democratic Party to the Reichstag to introduce a law withdrawing the property issue from the competence of the courts and empowering the individual States to settle it by means of State legislation. Owing to the "Popular Demand" initiated by the Socialists and Communists for the expropriation of the princes without compensation, this law did not come up for debate. But the proposal led to the resignation of Schacht, Governor of the Reichsbank, from the Party.

The State Governments were far from greedy as regards their royal families, as may be gathered from the following examples :

Bavaria : Under an agreement between the Bavarian Government and the Wittelsbachs, the latter received three forestry offices, and also the State forestry district of Wolfsbronn (7,802 hectares), which together in the year 1914 produced a net profit of three quarter million marks. In addition, they received forest property extending to 1,000 hectares. They further received a castle and villas in Berchtesgaden, castles in Berg, Edenkoben, Neuber a/D., Hohenschwangen, Fuerstenried, Hambach in the Pfaltz, with the estates belonging to these. They received estates in Rottenfeld and Bergsjetten, the former remount depot of Fuerstenfeld-Bruck, the deer preserves near Nymphenburg, the Arco houses in Munich, property in Feldafing, and the Gaertnerplat Theatre in Munich. Also household equipment in quantity, including the inventory of the "Reichen Kapelle," paintings, and fishing rights ; and residential rights in Wuerzburg Castle, Nymphenburg and Herrenwoerth.

Wuerttemberg: The agreement concluded was as follows:

The King, as far as his own person is concerned, renounces the Civil List, the State will take over the charges of the Civil List. The King personally renounces the usufruct of the Crown Lands.

The King will receive from the State a life annuity of 200,000 marks p.a., while the Queen if widowed will receive a life annuity of 100,000 marks p.a.

In addition, the King shall have the use of Babenhausen Castle, including the movable property contained therein, for life. He shall also enjoy hunting rights, to be further defined, on State property for life.

The large pearl necklet of the Crown Jewels shall be the King's property.

The State recognises the Hofkammergut as purely private property.

Baden: the former Grand Duke was awarded the following properties:

- 1 The castle in Baden.
- 2 The Palace formerly belonging to the Counts Sicking in Freiburg
- 3 The manor house at Badenweiler.
- 4 The vault in the Fasanengarten at Karlsruhe.
- 5 A capital sum of eight million marks.

Further, the use of forest property of 3,668 hectares for life was granted to the last Grand Duke and his consort.

Sachsen-Altenburg: The Duke received two castles and, in addition, a forestry district with an area of 164,653 hectares. Also a lump sum of 5,200,000 marks. The rest of the private fortune of the ducal house was not affected by the settlement. (The same applies in the case of the other States.)

The Duke had attacked the act of settlement, claiming that "it is invalid owing to error, coercion or threats, and also because it offends against morality." (The same happened in other States.)

The financial bearing of the problem was brought into relief in a Socialist pamphlet which, among other things, contained the following:

"If the claims of the former princes were met, they would receive about 500,000 hectares or two million acres in landed property alone. That would amount to approximately one third of the area of the State of Baden, or the whole of the State of Oldenburg, or nearly twice the State of Brunswick. But in addition to this landed property there would also be numerous castles, villas and other houses and, further, cash settlements and annuities, not only for the former princes themselves, but also for members of their families."

In the course of the Reichstag debates of June 29 and July 1 and 2, 1926, on the Government Bill relating to the property issue between the States and the former dynasties, the value of the princes' claims was repeatedly placed at 2,600 million Reichmarks, by far the greater part of which had already been settled by means of compositions.

In the absence of legislative regulation, the situation was in favour of the princes, who either regained their property under agreements concluded with the States, or won the actions that came before the courts, which were always imbued with respect for the former reigning families. In 1926, the Communists decided to cut the Gordian knot, carrying with them the Socialists who, in general, followed reluctantly, not daring to defy the workers, who were hostile to the extravagant demands of the royal families.

In the year 1926 a bill was introduced jointly by the Social Democrats and Communists providing for the expropriation of the princes without compensation, and this formed the basis of the so-called "Volksbegehren" (approximately: "Popular Demand," actually a preliminary plebiscite), as provided in Arts. 73 and 76 of the Weimar Constitution. No fewer than 12,523,939 valid votes were recorded in favour of the bill. At the last preceding elections a total of 10,969,000 votes had been polled by the Social Democrats and Communists. Thus two million more electors than had voted a few months earlier for the parties making the proposal, now voted in favour of the measure.

According to the Constitution the proposal now had to go before the Reichstag. It was rejected there, on May 6, 1926, by 236 votes against 141. Only the Social Democrats and Communists voted for it, all the other parties, against. Consequently, a so-called "Volksentscheid" ("Popular Decree," i.e., a final plebiscite) was held. On June 20, 1926, 14,455,184 votes were recorded in favour of the proposal for the expropriation of the princes without compensation, or two millions more than at the "Popular Demand." As according to the Constitution at least half the number of citizens entitled to vote ought to have voted for the bill—approximately 20 millions—to ensure its passage, this result meant the defeat of expropriation.

Nevertheless, the vote showed that the Germans were beginning to forget their dynasties.

Hindenburg received the result of the referendum with profound indignation, which he expressed in a letter to von Loebell, a former Imperial Minister :

"That I, who have spent my life in the service of the Prussian Kings and the German Emperors, feel this referendum primarily as a great injustice, and also as an exhibition of a regrettable lack of traditional sentiment and of great ingratitude, I do not need to explain to you. The very foundation of a constitutional State is the legal recognition of property, and the proposal of expropriation offends against the principles of morality and justice. . . . I trust therefore that our fellow citizens will reconsider their decision on the matter and will undo the mischief they have done."

Under Hindenburg's influence the Government decided to introduce in the Reichstag a Bill in the contrary sense to the result of the referendum, granting compensation to the former reigning houses for their German estates.

The Socialist attitude during the Reichstag debate on the Government Bill was not very clear. Though publicly opposing the Bill, they gave the Government to understand that they might ultimately change their minds and accept it as it stood. In this connection Stresemann records in his diary that at a Cabinet meeting on July 3, State Secretary Weissmann brought the news that "The Social Democratic Party would be ready to accept the law 'exactly as it stood' in the autumn. The reason for the leaders' defeat was to be found solely in the fact that there had not been time enough to turn round.<sup>1</sup> The people had more especially kept in mind the speeches they—the leaders—had made on behalf of expropriation without compensation, and as a result they had not felt able to disentangle themselves. But to-day their penitence was so great that they would gladly undo it all. This information from Weissmann, which was probably brought at the instance of Herr Braun, the Prussian Premier, had a decisive influence on the Cabinet's resolution regarding the withdrawal of the proposal"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The defeat of the Socialist leaders mentioned by Stresemann consisted in their failure to convince the party of the necessity of accepting the Government Bill.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 388.

In this connection the Communist Deputy Muenzenberg on May 6, 1926, made the following comment :

"It is interesting that Herr Luther is intimately associated with the pioneer of the plebiscite, the people's tribune, Philip Scheidemann. Scheidemann on December 2, 1925, said : 'Let us beware lest we again light sparks that may cause great harm. Imagine how agitated the people must become in case of a plebiscite' These are the same tones as Luther's : 'A plebiscite is inconvenient, a plebiscite means unrest, we must do everything to . . . avoid the excitement being carried to the people.'"

Then, when the Social Democrats, under the pressure of popular excitement, had participated in the Communists' "popular Demand," they were reproached by the Communists for their collaboration in the re-drafting of the Government Bill relating to the property issue between the States and the princes. For example, Deputy Schneller (Communist) on June 29 said in the Reichstag :

"Section 2 clearly shows that the Bill aims at nothing and can achieve nothing but this, that the royal robbers should be legally awarded the whole of their plunder. Anyone who supports Section 2, whether in the drafting of the Social Democrats or the Government parties, openly places himself into opposition with the 14½ million working people who have demanded expropriation without compensation. Section 2, which might comprise, at the most, only from 50 to 100 millions of the princes' property, from the outset leaves 2½ thousand millions in the hands of the princes.

Will the Social Democratic Deputies, in the interests of the monarchistic State profiteers, again lend a hand to cause the 14½ millions who have demanded expropriation without compensation to be duped in this way ?

"We shall leave no stone unturned to show the Social Democratic workers in what way the bourgeois parties, together with the Social Democrats, are trying to change the will of the 14½ millions into the opposite. . . In Section 2, the settlements that have been effected in the individual States with the aid of the Social Democratic Party have been eliminated. . . ."

The Bill presented by the Government having been opposed not only by the Left, but also by Count Westarp on behalf of the German Nationals, who were for reasons of principle opposed to any special legislation in regard to the former reigning dynasties, the Government withdrew it, refusing the Social Democratic demand for the dissolution of the Reichstag. Thus the problem reverted to where it had been before—within the competence of the State Governments. The Prussian Government, headed by Otto Braun and largely composed of Socialists, now

decided to conclude an agreement that was extremely favourable to the Hohenzollerns. Another agreement had already been concluded in October, 1925, but it could not be put into effect owing to the referendum and the Reichstag debate.<sup>1</sup> Some interesting remarks on this subject were made by Count Westarp in the Reichstag on June 2, 1926:

"... Owing to the extreme amicability of the House of Hohenzollern, a settlement was successfully concluded in October, 1925, which had received the unanimous approval of the Prussian State Government, including the Ministers Braun, Severing, Hoepker, Aschoff, the Social Democrats and Democrats. The whole ugly dispute of the past months could have been avoided if the Prussian Government and the parties backing them had kept the word of the Prussian Government. In this connection I cannot refrain from severely reproaching the democratic parties. Through their proposal to bring about a settlement by means of Reich legislation, they interfered with the organic development and gave rise to all the incitement and all the whipping up of excitement among the people. . . ."

However, Count Westarp became appeased a few months later, for on October 12, 1926, the Prussian Government concluded a final agreement with the Hohenzollerns who, according to their own valuation, received the equivalent of 70 million marks.<sup>2</sup>

Apparently, the Communists were not far wrong in denouncing the Socialists for duplicity in this matter.

It should be added that Hitler in 1926 took the part of the former reigning families.

<sup>1</sup> The first amicable agreement with the Hohenzollern family was made by the Prussian Government on January 22, 1920. Under this agreement, which was signed by Dr Suedekum, Prussian Finance Minister, and a prominent Social Democratic leader, the Hohenzollerns were to receive from the Prussian State Treasury the tidy sum of 100,000,000 marks. The agreement never became operative, because the atmosphere created two months later by the Kapp putsch was not favourable for a policy of generosity towards the Hohenzollerns.

<sup>2</sup> On July 25, 1933, the Administrator General of the Prussian Royal House made the following statement (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 26, 1933): "Despite earlier corrections, the daily Press has recently published reports to the effect that Kaiser Wilhelm has a fortune of 700,000,000 marks and is therefore the wealthiest German. This false figure, a pure invention, is cited on the basis of the income tax statistics available, and this creates the impression that it is founded on official material. As against this, it should be pointed out that the fortune of the Prussian Royal House is clearly shown in the agreements dated 6-10-25 and 12-10-26, published at the end of 1926 in the Prussian Code of Laws, and also that the present value of that fortune does not approximate even one-tenth of the above fantastic figure. In this connection it should be taken into account that in the circumstances then prevailing, the Royal House was obliged to renounce five-sixths of its private fortune in favour of the State, and that out of the fortune remaining to it, it has to cover the maintenance of 17 princely households comprising 49 persons, and also that of the numerous officials and employees taken over by the Royal House."

In spite of strong opposition within his own party, he issued orders that no Nazi was to take part in the referendum. It was from this moment onwards that substantial aid was forthcoming for the Nazis from the feudal landowners. In 1930 the Prussian Hohenzollern family sent Prince August Wilhelm, son of the ex-Kaiser, into the Nazi Party, which promptly had him elected to the Reichstag. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, owner of some 25,000 acres of land, also joined the party. The sons of the Landgrave of Hesse, masters of some 11,000 acres, sported a swastika armband and became intimates of Goering. Then there was the Prince of Waldeck, who joined the S.S., in which he held a high rank.

*Heyday of the Spirit of Locarno in the West—Treaty of Berlin to Complement Rhineland Pact*

Meanwhile, the spirit of Locarno was flourishing in Paris. On January 26, Briand in the Chamber of Deputies made a speech characterized by unlimited confidence in Germany and Stresemann:

"It is undesirable," he said, "to be continually casting doubts on Germany's goodwill. . . . Stresemann and I talked a new language, the language of Europe. Will the German people understand it? I think so, for the German people are a great people. . . . Are we to rebuild our splendid factories and marvellous centres of production, for a war to come every twenty-five or thirty years and destroy everything? Is blood to flow once more? No, no, and once more—NO!"

However, the great German people did not in fact understand the language of Europe, and blood did flow, exactly thirteen years later. Meanwhile, the German Government gained a valuable advantage: on May 21, France, Belgium and Germany signed an agreement concerning civil aviation, restoring to Germany the right to build commercial aircraft. The factories that were thenceforth working on the development of German civil aviation, were also employed by the Reichswehr to prepare the foundations for the reconstruction of military aviation. But Briand trusted the Germans. . . .

In 1925 and at the beginning of 1926, German-Soviet relations passed through a crisis. Russia viewed with suspicion the German negotiations with the Western Powers,



fearing that there was a capitalist coalition in process of formation behind the screen of Locarno. Stresemann did his utmost to allay the Russian apprehensions, which were in fact groundless. There were protracted conversations with Krestinski, the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, and with Tchitcherin, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and Litvinoff, the Joint Commissar, who, one after the other, came to Berlin. Finally, on December 22, 1925, Stresemann observed with satisfaction:

"In general, I had the impression that Tchitcherin was well satisfied with his Berlin impression, and that his nightmare of a continent arrayed against Russia had been dispelled. There was no sign of that deep distrust of German policy which had formed the basis of the last interview. All the negotiations were carried on in friendly fashion, with every indication that the tension had been eased."<sup>1</sup>

This result had been achieved through the decision to counter-balance the Rhineland Pact with a bilateral German-Soviet Pact. This Pact, known as the Treaty of Berlin, was signed by Stresemann and Krestinski on April 24, 1926. It confirmed the Treaty of Rapallo, adding a mutual obligation of neutrality in case either of the contracting parties were attacked, and an undertaking to refrain from participation in any economic or financial boycott directed against either party. In other words, by the Treaty of Berlin, Germany gave an assurance that she would not allow herself to be pushed into an adventure against Russia. She could do so all the more easily because neither the British nor the French Government had asked her to participate in any anti-Russian coalition, and because she herself intended to use the Russian trump card as well as, and simultaneously with, the Western trump card. The diplomatic situation created by the Locarno Treaty and the Treaty of Berlin was an excellent one for the Reich, for whereas the Western Powers and Russia viewed each other with the profoundest distrust, the Reich had achieved a *rapprochement* with the former while maintaining good relations with the latter. "The initiative in the Berlin Treaty was also, like in the Locarno Pact, taken by Germany in order to restore the psychological balance, for Locarno and the Berlin Treaty were not meant to cancel, but to supplement each other."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> *G. Stresemann*, by Baron R. von Rheinbaben, 1928, p. 285.

The policy of collaboration with the Soviet Union was approved by all the political parties. "For the first time since the establishment of the Republic in Germany, there has been a unanimous vote in the Foreign Affairs Committee (of the Reichstag). This unanimity has been obtained on the Russo-German Treaty."<sup>1</sup>

The same unanimity was shown in the Reichstag, when the ratification of the Berlin Treaty was debated in plenary session. This occurred on June 10, 1926, the debate being introduced by an interesting statement from Chancellor Marx, from which we quote the following extracts :

"The Treaty with the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics which is before you, and which is usually designated as the 'Berlin Treaty,' does not, according to the Constitution, require the approval of the legislative bodies. However, in view of its special political importance the Reich Government has nevertheless decided to obtain such approval before the documents of ratification are exchanged.

"I believe that in the past few years there was scarcely ever a general discussion on foreign policy in the Reichstag, in the course of which the need for good and friendly relations with Russia was not unanimously stressed by the Government of the day and the Parties. The traditional, centuries old friendship between Germany and Russia was, to the misfortune of both countries, severed by the world war, but already the Treaty of Rapallo of the spring of 1922 manifested the mutual need for the restoration of the old basis of good relations. Since then the development of international policy has made progress. German policy pursued, and was obliged to pursue, the line of endeavouring to reach neighbourly relations and an understanding with the Powers of the Versailles Treaty as well. Thus our path had led from the invasion of the Ruhr and the policy of sanctions to the Dawes Conference in London, and thence to Locarno and Geneva. Russia has also succeeded, since the year 1922, in consolidating her foreign political position. But this development did not in any way alter the fact that constituted the ultimate reason for the Treaty of Rapallo. It is still keenly realised both by the German and the Russian people that they are dependent on each other in many respects, and are not divided from each other by any conflict of vital interests.

"The Berlin Treaty before you also rests on this realisation. The first sentence of Article One says that the Treaty of Rapallo is to remain the basis of the relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. However, the general political development indicated by me has led us to complement the Treaty of Rapallo with new, concrete individual provisions. It is sufficiently well known that the last phase of German foreign policy was at first viewed with mistrust in Russia. On the Russian side the Treaties of Locarno and the notification of Germany's entry into the League of Nations were at first frequently criticised as a

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. III., p. 252.

radical swing-over of our policy, as an exclusive swing-over towards the West, which would render impossible the permanent maintenance of good relations with Russia. This mistrust was unfounded, but it was a fact with which we had to reckon. We have therefore recognised that it was necessary to adapt German-Russian relations to the new situation. It is this adaptation that constitutes the true political sense of the Berlin Treaty.

"Objectively, and in brief summary, the agreement arrived at lies in this, that the two countries promise in unchanged friendship to consult in all common political and economic matters, and that, in addition, they undertake to remain neutral in case either of them, despite its own peaceful attitude, is attacked or becomes the object of an aggressive economic policy on the part of a third Power. . . . Actually, this does not create a new political situation, but clarifies the existing situation. It represents only the contractual expression of the attitude which the German Government has always occupied."

After the Chancellor's *exposé*, representatives of all the parties expressed approval of the Treaty. The racialists, German Nationals, People's Party, Centre, Democrats, Socialists and Communists all unanimously approved the policy of collaboration with Russia; only a few dissident Communist Deputies, probably from dislike of the Komin-tern, opposed the Treaty. Dr Korsch, their mouthpiece, made some rather interesting remarks on German-Russian collaboration :

"The Communist Party has thereby retrospectively justified the fear expressed by Rosa Luxemburg, the pioneer of the international proletariat, already in the 11th Spartacus letter in September, 1918, where she wrote : 'And now the Bolsheviks, at the terminus of their thorny path, are threatened with the most awful thing of all : like some eerie ghosts, an alliance between the Bolsheviks and Germany approaches. That, of course, would be the final link of the fatal chain that the world war has slung round the neck of the Russian Revolution : first retreat, then capitulation, and finally an alliance with German imperialism. . . . Socialist revolution sitting on German bayonets, proletarian dictatorship under the tutelage of German imperialism—that would be the most monstrous thing we could experience ! . . .'"

In view of the hatred which the German Nationals and racialists had for the Communists, it must be admitted that they subordinated this internal preoccupation to the external interests of the Reich. Their motives were clearly indicated in the speeches of Dr Hoetsch (German National) and Count von Reventlow (racialist), from which we reproduce the most pertinent passages :

Dr Hoetsch :

"We agree to the Treaty submitted to us for ratification because, first

of all, it proceeds entirely along the line which we have always advanced, and to which we have constantly adhered. Not the least among the serious and weighty reasons that we opposed to the policy that led to Locarno was this, that the endeavour to bring about obligations to the West would slam the door leading to Russia and endanger our relations with Russia. . . . The fact that, as happens but rarely, there has been almost unanimous agreement between the political parties in connection with the present Treaty, is due to a feeling that the present German-Russian agreement would provide the necessary counterpoise to the obligations to the West entered into through Locarno: the thing that we have advocated. . . .”

Count Reventlow (VA—Voelkische Arbeitsgemeinschaft):

“My political friends are also able to say that they have for years urged the restoration of an active connection with Russia both in the political and the economic sphere. We are convinced that Germany's future plainly lies eastwards, interpreting the concept of East to mean not only Russia but the Near East and Far East generally. . . .

“That, in brief, is our attitude towards the Treaty. May it as soon as possible serve to break or gradually cancel our Western obligations and to make Germany independent, at all events in these political connections. . . .

“If we exploit, deepen and extend our Eastern connections, then we shall have the necessary basis of operation towards the West, without any blunt antagonism, but by way of actual negotiations on an equal footing . . . with support from the rear . . . In this sense we shall support the Russian agreement. . . .”

### *Germany Enters the League of Nations*

Another triumph for Stresemann in 1926 was Germany's admission to the League of Nations. After the signing of the Locarno Treaty the negotiations in this matter were speeded up, but at first met with unforeseen difficulties. Britain and France had promised Germany a permanent seat on the League Council. But when, in March, 1926, the Extraordinary Assembly met to discuss Germany's admission, some other countries—China, Brazil, Spain and Poland—also claimed permanent seats, and as the Assembly would not agree, they opposed the granting of a permanent seat to Germany, which was thereby delayed. The outcome was very embarrassing, because Brazil and Spain left the League. However, the difficulties were overcome at this price and Germany prevailed—she was granted a permanent seat on the Council by the next Assembly, in

September of the same year. It was at this Assembly that Germany entered the League. Eight years after the Armistice she made her official reappearance in the international community.

When, on September 10, the German delegation entered the Assembly hall, there was a veritable delirium among the other delegates and the spectators. The Germans were received with an enthusiasm and emotion akin to that of the biblical father when welcoming the Prodigal Son. Briand, in an impassioned speech, cried: "Away with the rifles, away with the machine-guns, away with the cannons! Make way for arbitration and peace!" The enthusiasm reached its paroxysm when Stresemann stepped on the platform and made a pacifist speech; none dared to recall the impassioned speeches which this same man had made in the Reichstag barely nine years earlier, demanding the unrestricted torpedoing of enemy merchant ships, and embracing the thesis of the General Staff concerning annexations at the expense of the same countries whose delegates were now hailing him as the apostle of peace.

### *Conversation in Thoiry*

For three years Stresemann had had nothing but successes: in 1924, there was the Dawes Loan, the first foreign loan, soon to be followed by an avalanche of others; in 1925, there was the evacuation of the Ruhr and the Cologne zone and the Locarno Treaty; in 1926, the Berlin Treaty and the triumphal entry into the League of Nations. These were laurels which even a Talleyrand might have envied. This series of successes turned Stresemann's head, despite the fact that he had made the need for "*finassieren*" into his maxim. Now he wanted to scorch ahead. He was in a hurry to be done with the matters that were delaying him in his Eastern policy. That was why he thought that it was necessary to come to a comprehensive settlement with France. In this connection he was committing a grave imprudence, for French opinion was not evolving so rapidly as the opinions of the French Foreign Minister. However, it must be admitted that Stresemann had had some encouragement to hasten the march of events. The Belgians, being in the throes of financial difficulties, had

made him an offer to the effect that they would be prepared to return the territories of Eupen and Malmédy in consideration of financial aid from the Reich (March 1926). Briand himself, in his conversations with the Germans, conveyed the impression of an absolutely Germanophile France. "Only a week ago Herr Briand told Herr Fritz Thyssen that if to-day a vote were taken in France as to the best alliance that France could make, eighty-five per cent. of Frenchmen would vote for a German alliance"—wrote Stresemann in his diary on August 22, 1926.<sup>1</sup>

In the circumstances it is not very surprising that Stresemann should have taken advantage of a private interview he had with Briand in Thoiry, near Geneva, on September 17, 1926, to pose the problems comprehensively and ask for their immediate solution. Briand willingly agreed, asking in return German aid in restoring France's finances, which were then in a deplorable state. The tone of the conversation is so interesting that Stresemann's notes of it, made the same day and immediately after the interview, deserve to be quoted almost *in extenso*:

"Herr Briand let me know through Professor Hesnard that he was going to propose to me that the occupation of the Rhineland should be wholly terminated, that the Saar should be given back to Germany, and Military Control abolished. He would begin this conversation by quite openly laying his cards on the table and explaining his views. Professor Hesnard asked me to reply with equal candour to the question that Briand would put to me—namely, whether we would in that case be ready to meet the economic needs of France in the matter of the issue of bonds.<sup>2</sup> The political interview started according to plan.

"Herr Briand began the interview by expressing his conviction that partial solutions were useless, as always involving the possibility of danger in the future. His purpose was to discuss a comprehensive solution of all the questions at issue between Germany and France, and he asked me to say openly whether we could come to terms with France in the economic sphere, if this question should be solved. In this connection he was not merely thinking of the return of the Saar, but the termination of the entire Rhineland occupation.

Stresemann: "I must be prepared for a stiff contest in Berlin, if I fall in with your proposal. I can only deal with the situation thus: an understanding on this basis seems to me possible solely if, in connection with the occupation of the Rhineland, there is no question of reducing the periods laid down by two years or so, etc., but that, when our agreement is in order, the troops will be removed with all the speed that is

<sup>1</sup> G. Stresemann—*His Diaries*, Vol. II., p. 429

<sup>2</sup> The industrial and railway bonds issued by Germany under the Dawes Plan, on which she paid the interest.

technically possible. If, then, I assume that our Cabinets agree, and that the work of the technical experts can begin at once, and within the first months of the coming year we have agreed with the other nations on the whole procedure, then all troops must have left the Rhineland by September 30, 1927 (Briand nodded agreement). I may also make it clear that the issue before us now is not the reduction in the periods of occupation, but an immediate suspension of the occupation as a whole, with an understanding in this regard."

Briand: "Of course. Everything would be arranged, and as quickly as possible."

Stresemann: "Excellent. The sooner we can dispose of the matter the better. And now what about the removal of Military Control?"

Briand: "A discussion is going on to-day between Massigli (departmental chief at the Foreign Ministry in Paris), Weissmann (State Secretary at the Prussian Ministry of State), and Puender (State Secretary at the Reich Chancellery). I believe there are still a few small matters to be settled. Perhaps you would see what you can do to help them reach agreement. Then I will at once instruct the French representative at the Ambassadors' Conference that the Military Control Commission is to be withdrawn."

Stresemann: "It is regrettable that there should still be small details not yet settled. The business should be taken out of the hands of officials, and ended without more ado. What are the remaining points?"

Briand: "I have given express instructions that the business is to be dealt with in a generous way. These officials are impossible. When I first attacked the question of removing the Military Control, I was confronted with piles of documents from the French War Ministry regarding German derelictions. I threw these papers into a corner, and asked what matter of importance still remained outstanding, as I had no intention of going into all these trivialities. A file of documents was then put before me. At last I succeeded in getting the matter narrowed down to essentials. Military men are in themselves ready to obey and to carry out orders: but they must be given clear orders and instructions. I had a talk to-day with Herr Weissmann, and also with Herr Puender and Massigli. If there are still some small outstanding points, it is better they should be settled. I shall then be most ready to issue instructions to the Ambassador, and support the removal of Military Control."

"What disquiets me are the national organizations in Germany. What is all this business with the Stahlhelm? This Stahlhelm has issued a book of instructions, with a detailed programme of military training—in marksmanship, manoeuvring, etc. It is quite natural that my military advisers should call my attention to this sort of thing, and complain that I see Germany with the eye of a politician alone, and do not recognise what is really going on in Germany. Why are such activities not suppressed by the German Government?"

Stresemann: "I do not know the book issued by the Stahlhelm: but I am quite safe in saying offhand that if there were any question

of secret training the book would not appear publicly or be sold in bookshops. It is only to be expected that a great army cannot be spiritually disbanded, and memories of old war days survive in all Associations of front-line fighters. These organizations are perhaps a danger in domestic politics, because they tend at the moment to concern themselves with matters which they do not in the least understand, but from the military point of view they mean nothing, and are not indeed supported by the Reichswehr. The Reichswehr Minister, Gessler, has spoken sharply against them in the Reichstag. General von Seeckt has never concealed the fact that he would only deal with real soldiers, and would have nothing to do with playing at soldiers. The Stahlhelm itself has bitterly complained that the Reichswehr barrack buildings have not been placed at its disposal. Nor must the Stahlhelm be conceived as a reactionary organization. In the election campaign of April, 1924, I once spoke in Magdeburg on behalf of the Dawes Plan. At the conclusion of the meeting the leader of the Stahlhelm, Seldte, himself called for cheers for me, and he vigorously defended his attitude on foreign policy, when he was later attacked for having done so. The Republic in Germany has taken no account of the psychological needs of the masses. It is getting hidebound in the dull black jacket of everyday life. Men want colour, joy and movement—hence the success of the Stahlhelm on the one side, and the Reichsbanner on the other.”

Briand : “ That is just how I conceived matters. A man naturally enjoys having a steel helmet on his head and behaving as though he were still a mighty warrior. I don't attach serious importance to all this, but do what you can to prevent my military men coming to me with all these complaints.”

Stresemann : “ If we are in agreement about the withdrawal of the troops from the Rhineland, the return of the Saar territory, and the abolition of Military Control, it is important that we should come to an understanding over Eupen and Malmédy.”

“ I then gave Briand a detailed statement of the negotiations with Belgium, referred to the pronouncement by Vandervelde on the 9th July, and the statement of Delacroix (Belgian member of the Reparations Commission), and asked what was the French Government's attitude to this matter. . . .

“ Belgium will certainly resume the negotiations. M. de Brouckère has said in a very sharply worded interview that it is for Belgium alone to dispose of Eupen-Malmédy ; if Belgium chooses to return these territories to Germany, that is a matter which concerns no one else, least of all Monsieur Poincaré. Will France make further difficulties for us if these negotiations are resumed, and is there in France any objection in principle to such a transaction ? ”

Briand : “ No. If the whole problem is solved, the question of Eupen and Malmédy will be solved with it.”

Stresemann : “ . . . We were informed everywhere by our friends who visited Paris and France that they had been well received there. Which had done much to relieve the atmosphere. It was indeed a significant symptom that Fritz Thyssen, who had had a talk with Briand, had



expressed himself as quite enchanted with the welcome he had received on that occasion.

"Briand agreed, and said that Thyssen intended to reach further agreements with France, over and above the one in connection with iron. When I told him that Fritz Thyssen was the best known German National industrialist, he laughed very heartily and said 'If they were all like that, it would be much easier to come to an understanding.' He was much pleased at the news about Thyssen's political attitude, and said that he could turn that to very good account in France

"I then brought up the question as to how the Investigation Protocol would be handled when Military Control came to an end, and reminded him of the conversations we had had on the subject at Locarno, *i.e.*, that there should only be investigation when a complaint was received from any given Power, and then only when the aggrieved Power had put the matter up to the League Council, and secured a majority of the Council votes "

Briand · "It will be necessary to find a formula that meets your wishes and will also secure Germany's co-operation. Herr Gaus must have a conversation on the subject with M. Fromageot and Mr Hurst. But the whole point is really an academic one. No one would dream of an investigation in the case of a League Power. I agree in advance with what may be decided on the matter by the jurists, subject to your view. It is only necessary to have some sort of formula to satisfy the right of the League to exercise a certain control."<sup>1</sup>

Thus what Stresemann wanted was: complete evacuation of the Rhineland, return of the Saar and Eupen-Malmédy, and abolition of inter-Allied control of German armaments—all this in exchange for financial aid. The reader might ask how it was that Germany, whose own financial position had been very precarious even as late as 1924, and which owed her prosperity solely to American loans, was able to help France? The answer is very simple—she could obtain fresh American loans and transfer them to France. Briand agreed to this transaction, just as he had accepted Stresemann's explanation on the German semi-military organizations. He had gone so far as to say of Thyssen: "If they (the German Nationals) were all like that, it would be much easier to come to an understanding." Yet that same Thyssen, together with his Ruhr colleagues, financed the National Socialist organization, and was one of those responsible for the political rise of Adolf Hitler. But Briand trusted him.

Stresemann was right when, four days after the interview with Briand, he observed to the German colony at

<sup>1</sup> G. Stresemann—*His Diaries*, Vol. III., pp. 17-26.

Geneva: "We have not done badly at the bar of history during these seven years" (*i.e.*, from 1918 to 1926).<sup>1</sup>

The German Government not only approved the transaction concluded between Briand and Stresemann, but immediately proceeded to examine ways and means to carry out its financial side. The reports they received from the American bankers were very optimistic: the United States market would be capable of absorbing bonds worth a billion marks gold per annum. And in view of these reports Stresemann exhorted the United States to be liberal:

"I may fairly assume, therefore," he said in a speech on October 2,<sup>2</sup> "that it is consonant with the policy of the United States to give their support to the task undertaken at Thoiry, the aim of which is to secure a real peace for Europe, by which I mean one that is no longer threatened by the perils of military occupation."

Stresemann thought he could settle all the Western problems by paying France with American money, after which the time would have come to broach the question of the Eastern annexations and that of colonies. "I refused at Thoiry to discuss the question of our Eastern frontier and that of our colonies. One can only advance step by step. When the day arrives when, in one way or another, the question of our Eastern frontier will come up for discussion, the atmosphere between us and France must already be such that we can broach this new problem," said Stresemann on October 7, before the Reichstag Committee of Foreign Affairs.<sup>3</sup>

However, Stresemann's beautiful dreams were not to be realized so quickly as he had thought at Thoiry. There was energetic opposition in France, where, besides, the financial situation had begun to improve. The Cabinet did not approve the transaction suggested by Briand. After a few months the German Government was obliged to yield to the evidence and regard the Thoiry settlement as having been abandoned. In December 1926, Briand again met Stresemann at Geneva, and did not conceal from him that the conversation of Thoiry had better be forgotten. After this Stresemann reverted to his customary prudence, proceeding only step by step, without trying to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Papiers de Stresemann* (French translation), Vol. III., p. 25.

precipitate events, and doing his utmost not to scare foreign opinion with too comprehensive demands at a time.

### *Von Seeckt Resigns*

Another important event in 1926 was the resignation of General von Seeckt, though the cause was of no great importance. On October 3, 1926, a Press *communiqué* announced that Prince William Hohenzollern, eldest son of the ex-Crown Prince, had received a temporary commission in the Ninth Infantry Regiment of the Reichswehr in Potsdam, and had participated, as second-lieutenant, in some manœuvres at Muensingen. This news caused a storm in a teacup—the Republican parties in the Reichstag made violent protests against the admission of a Hohenzollern into the Army. However, this would not have sufficed to cause the resignation of the head of the Reichswehr, which had long been a State within the State, with an unassailable authority and ascendancy. Moreover, the Republican parties that were now perturbed over the admission of the ex-Crown Prince's son into the Army, had in 1923 unanimously approved the return of the ex-Crown Prince and his family to Germany. But intrigue played a part in the matter: the young General von Schleicher, who was becoming increasingly influential in the Reichswehr Ministry, was in connivance with Colonel Oscar von Hindenburg, the President's son, and von Schleicher's former regimental comrade, exerting pressure on the President to the detriment of General von Seeckt. On October 9, President Hindenburg finally decided to accept the resignation of von Seeckt, who soon after went to the Far East, where he helped to organize the Chinese Army. His place was taken by General von Heye, until then in command of *Wehrkreis I* (Koenigsberg). On October 16, at the formal transfer of powers in the presence of President Hindenburg, the new head of the Reichswehr said to his predecessor: "You have raised Germany into the saddle again—I shall only have to keep her there."

It is interesting to note what a German historian of the Republic has to say about General von Seeckt's resignation:

"The election of Field Marshal von Hindenburg to the Presidency of the Reich still further increased military influence in German affairs.

Hindenburg looked upon himself as the real Commander-in-Chief of the Reichswehr. He insisted that all important military questions should be reserved for his personal decision, and he offered a determined resistance to all attempts on the part of politicians to interfere in military issues. Hence it is not difficult to understand that Hindenburg's election to the Presidency diminished the authority of the Chief of the Reichswehr, General von Seeckt, who until 1925 had been the most outstanding among the Generals. Under President Hindenburg he was relegated to second place and rendered impotent to undertake anything against Hindenburg's wishes. A sharp conflict had already broken out in the course of the World War between Hindenburg and Ludendorff on the one hand, and Mackensen and Seeckt on the other. As early as 1926 Seeckt was dismissed by Hindenburg. . . . The President, who had certainly no reason to support Seeckt of all people, promptly relieved him of his post. Only complete outsiders could imagine that Seeckt's fall denoted a triumph of the civilian or the Republican forces over the military power. In reality the whole affair was a private quarrel among the Generals. Seeckt's successor, General von Heye, was completely subservient to Hindenburg, and the most important political brain in the Reichswehr Ministry remained that of General von Schleicher."<sup>1</sup>

The same German historian defines the position of the Reichswehr in relation to the civil authorities thus:

"The Generals did not interfere in everyday matters of civilian policy, but in important affairs the veto of the Reichswehr sufficed at any time to exclude a person or to render impossible a course of action. From 1920 onwards the German Republic really always had a twofold Government. One was the Chancellor and his Ministers, the other was composed of the leading Reichswehr Generals. In any conflict between the two 'Governments' the Reichswehr generally emerged victorious. The whole was called 'German Democracy.'"<sup>2</sup>

General Groener said the same thing more laconically:

"The Reichswehr has become a factor which no one could pass over in political decisions."

### *Stresemann and the German Nationals*

Since the end of October 1925, the German Nationals had conducted a noisy but harmless opposition against the Government's foreign policy. Heavy industry, on the other hand, supported this policy by a very active *rapprochement* with Western industry, American as well as British and French. Thus Stresemann was right in calling attention to this crass contradiction between the activities of the industrialists and the statements of the

<sup>1</sup> A. Rosenberg, *A history of the German Republic*, pp. 268-269.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

German Nationals, who owed their existence largely to the financial support of those same industrialists:

"What does it mean when a German National Deputy says that the faith in an international solidarity of international interests and of trade is, if possible, more menacing than the Marxist delusion of an international solidarity of interests among the working classes? Are the people who say such things not aware that the International Cartel of German heavy industry owes its origin to a prominent German National man of business, Fritz Thyssen? Do they not know that the international Potash Agreement was concluded entirely by persons belonging to the Parties of the Right? Is it to be made a reproach to the leaders of our great shipping enterprises that they entered into an agreement with American capitalists in order to reconstruct the German merchant marine after its complete collapse in 1919, not being able to do so unsupported? The main thing is that all these varieties of international co-operation shall be made to serve the national renaissance. This is the decisive point."<sup>1</sup>

While criticising the German Nationals for their opposition, Stresemann wished to attract them into the Government. Sometimes he even went so far as to flatter them. Indeed, he went so far as to glorify the man<sup>2</sup> who was morally responsible for the murder of Rathenau and Erzberger: "It is plain to everyone who knows Mr Helfferich that in him that Party (the German Nationals) has placed at the service of the Reich one of the ablest and most eminent Germans of the times."<sup>3</sup> In reality, Stresemann, and the German Government as a whole, only wanted the early return of the German Nationals into the Government with a view to restoring a powerful bloc composed of all the bourgeois parties. This ambition was realized in January 1927.

### *President Hindenburg's Camarilla*

In order to understand the political events of the years 1925-1933, it is necessary to recall that the Reich President frequently acted under the influence of the camarilla surrounding him, which increased with the years, for age made him increasingly accessible to their intrigues. The camarilla's king-pin was Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg, the President's son and *aide-de-camp*. His personal friends

<sup>1</sup> *G. Stresemann—His Diaries*, Vol. III., p. 94.

Helfferich perished on April 23, 1924, in a railway accident. *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 87.

could easily pull the strings by abusing the President's paternal feelings. From the political point of view two men played a considerable role in the President's entourage: Otto Meissner and Colonel—later General—Kurt von Schleicher. Meissner was a professional official. In 1920, he became President Ebert's *Chef de Cabinet*, maintaining cordial relations with the Weimar majority parties. In 1925 he succeeded in impressing the aged Marshal with his personal charm and competence, and was retained as *Chef de Cabinet* of the President of the Republic. Meissner now evolved in accordance with the prevailing tendency in Germany, veering more and more to the Right. He completed his evolution by becoming, after Hindenburg's death, *Chef de Cabinet* to Hitler. It required the adroitness of a Fouché for him to retain his post successively under Ebert, Hindenburg and Hitler. Meissner, like the great majority of German officials, possessed that adroitness.

The second man, von Schleicher, had been a staff officer during the war. After the Armistice he entered the Reichswehr Ministry, where he remained until he himself became Reichswehr Minister and, later, Reich Chancellor. A regimental colleague of Oskar von Hindenburg, he always enjoyed the friendship of the latter and the patronage of his father. Being endowed with an exceptional talent for intrigue, he was the *Eminence grise* of the Reichswehr, exerting considerable influence in German politics. He had a considerable share in bringing about the resignation of von Seeckt and his replacement by General von Heye. In 1930 he advised the President to replace von Heye by his own personal friend, General von Hammerstein-Equord, and this increased his influence on the Reichswehr still further.

## CHAPTER X

### GERMANY'S MATERIAL AND MORAL REARMAMENT

#### *The New Marx Government*

As a result of the negotiations between the bourgeois parties, the German Nationals re-entered the Government. The previous Cabinet having resigned on December 17, 1926, the President on January 29 appointed the following new Cabinet :

Dr Marx (Centre)	Chancellor
Dr Stresemann (People's Party)	Foreign Affairs
Dr Brauns (Centre)	Labour.
Dr Gessler (Democrat)	Reichswehr
Dr Curtius (People's Party)	National Economy.
Dr Koehler (Centre)	Finance.
Dr Wilhelm Koch (German National)	Communications.
Dr Schaetzel (Bavarian People's P.)	Postal Services
von Kendell (German National)	Interior
von Hergt (German National)	Vice-Chancellor and Justice.
von Schiele (German National)	Agriculture

On February 13, 1927, the new Government made a statement on foreign policy before the Reichstag. Despite the German National participation, the Government declared that it would continue the policy based on the Dawes Agreement, the Locarno Treaty and participation in the League of Nations.

"Our claim to a position of moral and political equality with other nations," the statement went on, "cannot be disputed. To get this recognised in fact is the aim of our political labours"

The idea of equality with other nations thenceforth constituted a powerful lever in regaining for Germany the freedom to re-arm. But for the moment the Government statement dwelt on the question of Rhineland evacuation : "In the first place stands the task of restoring the free exercise of sovereignty over German territory." The statement continued (curiously enough for a Government composed of all the bourgeois parties) as follows :

"If we have laid stress on the complex of questions included in the concept of Locarno and League policy, that does not mean any

diminution of our interest in the cultivation of our other international relations with other States, especially with our neighbour, the Union of Associated Soviet Republics "1

Of course, this passage was dictated not by any tenderness on the part of the bourgeois parties for the Communist State, but by the vital necessity of keeping it friendly in order the better to encircle Poland and Czechoslovakia, and also to facilitate Germany's secret rearmament, which was partly carried out in Soviet territory.

*End of Inter-Allied Control of German Armaments*

From 1927, the Reich's secret rearmament could go ahead with increased vigour, for on February 20 of that year the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control was withdrawn from Germany. The Reich was now free from all control, for the prerogatives of the League of Nations in this matter were and remained purely theoretical. The Reichswehr could breathe freely.

The Inter-Allied Commission had begun its work on March 1, 1920, so that it had been at its task for seven years. But the task—the disarmament of Germany—was never accomplished. The Commission's personnel was too small: not more than 380 officers and 730 non-commissioned officers or men. Besides, whenever the Commission wished to visit a barracks or a factory it had to inform the German military authorities of the date and object of the visit. And the Germans appointed a liaison officer to accompany the committee of investigation. In the circumstances, unexpected visits—the only kind that could have produced results—were impossible.

It might be said that the most fruitful period of the Commission's activities was that from 1920 till January 1923. After the occupation of the Ruhr Basin, the German authorities systematically obstructed the Commission, so that it could not resume work until 1925; but then the atmosphere of Locarno rendered rigorous control impossible.

The Commission succeeded best in the matter of fortifications. Their locations being known, it was not difficult to have them destroyed. Thus the fortifications of Western Germany, Kiel and Heligoland were dismantled by January 1, 1922. On the other hand, the Eastern

<sup>1</sup> G. Stresemann—*His Diaries*, Vol. III., pp. 114-115.



fortifications were left intact—in accordance with the Peace Treaty.

The Commission's second task—supervision of the destruction of the war material existing at the time the Peace Treaty was signed, and prevention of new production—was incomparably more complicated. The Reich refused to supply the least information concerning stocks of war material, alleging that the relevant documents had been destroyed during the Revolution. (All these documents were " re-discovered " in 1935, at Spandau, carefully filed in the Reich Archives.) In the circumstances it cost a considerable effort to find at least part of the war material. Supervision of the factories was even more difficult. There were 7,000 war factories to be supervised, and the total staff of the Commission never exceeded 1,000 persons. This plain juxtaposition of the two figures is sufficient to show that supervision of the manufacture of war material could not have been other than superficial.

Under pressure from the Commission, the German factories that had produced war material during the war pretended to revert, and in part did in fact revert, to peace production. But as Germany was a producer of machine tools, it was not difficult for her to resume war production at an opportune moment. And it is therefore safe to say that the Peace Treaty left Germany's industrial war potential, particularly as regards the engineering and chemical industries, intact. This war potential, without which aggressions on the modern scale are inconceivable, was developed first through inflation, then with the aid of foreign loans.

On June 30, 1924, after the interruption of the Commission's work caused by the events of 1923, the German Government agreed to a general inspection, which was carried out by the Commission from September 8, 1924, to January 25, 1925. Despite its limited staff and resources, the Commission was able to establish the following defaults :

- (a) Production of war material had been resumed from 1923.
- (b) The police force (which had actually been militarised) had been increased from 150,000 to 180,000 men, the effectives of the Reichswehr being thereby more than doubled.
- (c) The General Staff had been retained in the form of a *Heeresleitung*.
- (d) The Reichswehr was being given intensive training with a view to making it into the nucleus of a big army.

The Allied Governments attached no importance to the Commission's report of these defaults. They were in a hurry to sign the Locarno Treaty. The report was buried under a mountain of diplomatic correspondence, and in 1927 the Commission itself was liquidated.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, it may be said that the Commission's chief accomplishment had been the destruction of a considerable and perhaps even the greater part of the armaments left by the Imperial Army. But these would in any case have become antiquated and valueless after a time. And since German industry had remained intact and had even been able to develop, the brains of the Reichswehr—the *Heeresleitung*—was able to build up new and far more terrible armaments. "The fact that an army of 100,000 men quite naturally gave birth to a national army," wrote Lieutenant-General Marx, "is due to the work accomplished by the Reichswehr from 1918 till 1935."

#### *Revelations of "Scoundrels" on Secret German Rearmament*

To-day no one would deny the truth of General Marx's statement, but in 1927 Stresemann denounced Professor W. Foerster, the famous German pacifist, for revealing some aspects of German rearmament in his review, *Menschheit*. "In the face of the continued false allegations in the *Menschheit*," wrote Stresemann on November 2, 1927, "I did say, without mentioning names, that these blackguards invent new lies against Germany every day."<sup>2</sup> Yet Foerster was only telling the truth.

When, on December 16, 1926, Scheidemann in a Reichstag speech dared to make some revelations on the Reichswehr's secret rearmament, he was greeted with cries of "Traitor! Scoundrel! Out with him!"

"I want to prove with facts," said Scheidemann, "that the Reichswehr is increasingly becoming a State within the State, obeying its own laws and pursuing its own policy. . . According to a memorandum of Messrs. Junkers which has come into our hands, there is at the Reichswehr

<sup>1</sup> When the growing secret rearmament of Germany provoked demands for an enquiry by the League of Nations, Noske, that old and faithful friend of the Reichswehr, then Oberpraesident of Hanover, said publicly: "Any German statesman prepared to accept such an enquiry would be killed like a mad dog, and rightly so." Noske never ceased to be a member of the Socialist Party. (See *Future Germany* by Colonel T. H. Minshall, 1943, p. 25.)

<sup>2</sup> *G. Stresemann—His Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 236.

Ministry a special department known as S G., whose members are mostly officers of the regular Army. . . . This department has since 1923 paid out sums amounting to approximately 70 million marks gold per annum. There is an account in a big Berlin bank on which a Reichswehr Ministry Official named Spangenberg draws for necessary payments. According to other information, this Spangenberg has been in close touch with the GEFU (Gesellschaft zur Foerderung gewerblicher Unternehmungen) whose style has now been changed to Wirtschatskontor, or WIKO. The latter's managers include a certain Otto zur Leiden, who lives permanently abroad, notably in Russia. Several million marks have been paid to the GEFU through Spangenberg, which demonstrates that there is collusion between the Reichswehr Ministry and that company.

"The task of the GEFU consists in establishing an armaments industry abroad, notably in Russia. The agreements have been signed under false names . . .

"We know, from an absolutely reliable source, that Russian munitions were the cargo of several vessels that arrived from Leningrad in September and October, 1926. These vessels belonged to the Stettin Navigation Company. Their names were *Gothenburg*, *Rastenburg*, and *Colberg* . . ."

### *How the Reichswehr Solved the Problem of Rearmament*

These revelations require an explanation. The Reichswehr was organized not as a small army, but as a big army in miniature, and contained in embryo all the organs of one. Companies represented former regiments, regiments stood for divisions, and the *Wehrkreise* were the cells of future armies. Thus the officers, non-commissioned officers and men always received a training above their actual rank and corresponding to their higher ranks in the future army. The Reichswehr of 100,000 men was from 1924 in a position to provide *cadres* for an army of millions. There remained only the question of war material.

General von Seeckt solved this question in a manner that escaped the indiscreet eye of the Inter-Allied Commission of Control. This is what he himself said :

"It will not be in the interest of future armies to accumulate stocks of material that become rapidly antiquated. It will be sufficient to make a few prototypes and arrange for their mass production, the factories being organized for a rapid switch-over from peace to war production. This task must be accomplished by close co-operation between soldiers and engineers. Naturally, it will necessitate State subsidies for the maintenance of the machines and the purchase of raw materials. But on the whole, this system will be less onerous than the production and storage of large quantities of material that rapidly devaluates."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gedanken eines Soldaten*, pp. 98-100.

It was an ingenious idea. But it could only be carried out by a highly industrialised country capable of rapid mass production of the prototypes, and resolved to start war at a moment chosen by itself—for the switch-over to mass production had to be strictly adapted to the time chosen to start the war.

However, until February 1927, there was the delicate question how to evade the attention of the Inter-Allied Commission of Control. To overcome this difficulty, the Reichswehr resorted to an ingenious subterfuge. The prototypes would be made abroad, in factories situated beyond the range of the Commission. Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, the U.S.S.R., Spain and other countries would thus provide Germany with so many experimental zones where her engineers could complete perfect models against the day when she could manufacture them in her own territory. Germany within her own frontiers would have only offices for designers and centres of experiment to issue directives for the construction of the different categories of armaments. Liaison between the offices and the foreign factories would be attended to by limited liability companies, as the GEFU or WIKO mentioned by Scheidemann, these being also in touch with different departments of the Reichswehr Ministry.

The designing of aircraft prototypes was entrusted to the "*Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft fuer Luftfahrt*" of Berlin, of which Prince Henry of Prussia was chairman. It was from there that directives for the construction of prototypes were issued, the work being methodically divided between the different makers. The latter, in addition to their headquarters in Germany, also had a number of branches abroad. One of the first firms to expatriate part of their works was Messrs Junkers, who made the necessary agreements with the U.S.S.R. from 1923 onwards. A little later the firm also established a factory at Malmoe (Sweden) under the style of *Svensk Flygindustrie*. This branch made a rapid success, building military aircraft in addition to commercial aircraft.

The firm "Rohrbach" established itself at Copenhagen, where it engaged in mounting machine-gun turrets, light cannon, bomb racks, etc., on aircraft. It also established a factory, jointly with Messrs Junkers, in Eski-Shehire

(Turkey), which supplied aircraft to the Turkish Government. Attached to the works was a flying school directed by Reichswehr officers on leave or on the retired list.

Messrs Fokker were established in Holland and the U.S.S.R., where they had several works, built at their own expense, and producing fighter and bomber aircraft. The principal works was at Mchetsk, Russia. It was built in 1925, the year of Locarno. Messrs Heinkel established themselves at Stockholm under the style of Svenska Aero; they too produced fighter and bomber aircraft.

Messrs Dornier had a works at Manzell, on the German shore of Lake Constance, but they also had a branch works on the opposite shore, in Altenrhein, Switzerland, another in Holland, and another in Kronstadt, U.S.S.R.

Similar examples could be given as regards other products. For instance, the research centres of the chemical industry were at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut in Berlin, the Chemico-Technical Institute in Breslau and at different laboratories of private industry (I. G. Farben, Badische Anilin, Schering-Kahlbaum, Hugo Stolzenberg, etc.).

But the branches of the producing companies were mainly in Russia. For example, from 1924, Hugo Stolzenberg had a works at Trotsk, on the Volga, where phosgene and other poison gases were produced. In 1928, Badische Anilin sent ten German chemists to Moscow with a view to developing the Soviet chemical industry, which was working for the Reichswehr as well. Other firms followed this example, as Bayer & Lonza. In 1928 the German engineers organized at Tver a chemical institute, which was directed by a German staff. The Soviet chemical industry benefited by this, experiencing a prodigious expansion, so that in 1930 it accounted for seven per cent. of the European production.

#### *Reichswehr Collaboration with Soviet Russia and other European Countries*

At the time of the Reichstag debate on this subject the existence of German-Soviet military relations had been established beyond doubt. The GEFU company, acting as agents of the Reichswehr, made regular payments to

Russia, notably to the principal Moscow Banks, as the State Bank, etc. These payments were made at intervals of from eight to fourteen days. Very large sums—for instance, 550,000 dollars in May 1925—were endorsed by the Dresdner Nationalbank and the Darmstaedter Nationalbank on the GEFU's current account, amounting to millions of marks. The men authorized to dispose of these funds had formerly held military posts.

On December 10, 1928, Deputy Kuenstler read in the Prussian Diet a letter addressed by the Soviet State Bank to the Moscow branch of the GEFU, showing that the GEFU was continually paying the Soviet State Bank through the New York Equitable Bank Trust such large sums that it was worth while using telegraphic orders, regardless of loss of interest.

This military co-operation benefited both parties. It enabled the Soviet Union to develop her own war industries with the aid of German technicians and capital (or rather American, British, etc., capital, borrowed by Germany, then transferred to Russia), and enabled Germany to re-arm secretly, safe from the eyes of the Allies.

Moscow did not deny the collaboration revealed in Germany. In January 1927, Bukharin said, in the course of a speech :

" We do not and never have concealed the fact that we have concluded an agreement with Messrs. Junkers under which aircraft were and are being built, and we can openly declare that we shall never deny ourselves the benefit of the good offices of any capitalist State that is prepared to send us instructors, build aircrafts on our own territory against agreed payment, and manufacture other instruments required for the defence of the country."

In the course of the Reichstag debate of February 1928, Reichswehr Minister Gessler admitted that preliminary negotiations on German-Soviet co-operation had begun already in 1921, with the active participation of General von Seeckt. In May 1928, the German Government admitted before the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee that this co-operation had continued regularly.

The activities of the GEFU met with the complete approval of General von Seeckt, as he said in so many words in a letter he wrote to Messrs Junkers on August 18, 1924 : " I entirely approve of the conduct of the GEFU."

Revelations concerning the liaison between the Reichswehr and the Soviet authorities were contained in a closely documented pamphlet published in March 1927, by the Executive of the German Socialist Party. The title was: "*Sowjetgranaten-Sowjetrussland als Munitionslieferant fuer die Reichswehr. Berlin im Maerz 1927. Herausgegeben vom Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands.*" The pamphlet confirmed and amplified the revelations of Scheidemann. It contained, among others, the following facts:

1. Arrival in Stettin, in November, 1926, of several ships from Russia, with cargoes of arms and munitions for the Reichswehr
2. Existence of a secret agreement between the Reich and the Soviet Union on their co-operation as regards war industries.
3. Conclusion of a first agreement concerning the Junker works in Russia in February, 1923
4. Erection of a poison gas works at Trotsk (near Kubishev) between 1923 and 1926 by Dr Hugo Stolzenberg Company.
5. Inspection tour by Reichswehr officers in Russia to supervise the running of German-Soviet factories
6. The sending of German engineers, technicians, and workers to Russia to run the factories
7. The part of intermediary between the Reichswehr and Russia was played by the GEFU Company (*Gesellschaft zur Foerderung gewerblicher Unternehmungen*) which was founded in 1923, and charged with the direction of the management of the German factories in Russia and supervision of the deliveries of war material to Germany. In the spring of 1926 its name was changed to WIKO (*Wirtschaftskontor*).

While Russia provided the Reichswehr with a field of experiment for aircraft, explosives and poison gas, other countries did the same as regards guns and tanks.

For instance, in 1919, soon after Versailles, Krupp's sold to the Swedish Bofors steel works licences and patents in consideration for a share in the company. In this way Krupp's acquired considerable influence not only on Bofors, but also on its branch, Nobel Kraut, which specialised in gunpowder and explosives, and German engineers were able to conduct experiments there, whose results were later to be used in the German factories of Krupp's. (These related, among other things, to prototypes of cannon, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns and armour plate for tanks.) A similar part was played as regards armoured cars and tanks by the Swedish Lanverk works, in which the German metal industry held a majority share.

Finally, model U-boats were built by German engineers at Vigo (Spain), at the Etchevarieta shipyards, and at Kronstadt and Sevastopol.

In 1928, a Socialist Deputy, Paul Lévi, revealed in the Reichstag that even German factories were producing tanks, military aircraft and other war material forbidden by the Peace Treaty, and that German engineers were carrying out trials with U-boats in the Spanish shipyards at Vigo.<sup>1</sup>

*Karl Ossietzky, Victim of the Weimar Republic  
and the Third Reich*

The secret air rearmament was revealed by the pacifist weekly, *Weltbuehne*, in March and April 1929. This paper exposed the collaboration between the Reichswehr and the aircraft industry, and the reconstruction of military aviation behind the screen of civil aviation, a task assumed by the aviation department of the Ministry of Transport. Instead of denying the facts, the German Government confirmed them by prosecuting the author of the articles, Walter Kreiser, and the editor of the *Weltbuehne*, Karl von Ossietzky, for divulging military secrets and high treason. The action was filed in 1929, when Hermann Mueller was Chancellor, and Stresemann Foreign Minister. A strange coincidence—Karl von Ossietzky, a future Nobel Peace Prize winner (in 1936, when he was in a Hitlerite concentration camp; d. 1938), being prosecuted for fighting against German rearmament, at a time when another Nobel Peace Prize winner, Gustav Stresemann, was a Minister of the Reich. The reader may judge for himself which of the two

<sup>1</sup> After the outbreak of the present war the Germans were no longer interested in concealing the truth about their secret rearmament under the Weimar régime. Thus, on April 15, 1943, Dr Waninger, director of design in the Rheinmetall Company said at a public meeting: "The illegal manufacture of arms began in 1921. In those days the construction of big guns was taken up most thoroughly. Our work could only be done if kept secret from the Inter-Allied Control Commission. So my office worked first in Berlin, then it was moved to Dusseldorf and later on to a place in the Lueneberger Forest. The gigantic development of artillery in those years was mainly due to the secret preparatory work of our department." In June 1943, Dr Walther Roland, director of tank production, told on Berlin radio how secret tank experiments and production were carried out before 1927, so that by 1929 a real panzer force was in existence. (See *Future Germany* by Colonel T. H. Minshall, 1943, p. 25.)



deserved the Prize better. The Reich High Court at Leipzig gave judgment two-and-a-half years later. On November 23, 1931, the two accused were sentenced to eighteen months of imprisonment for giving away military secrets. They were sent to prison immediately, but were released under an amnesty on December 22, 1932. After the Reichstag fire, on February 28, 1933, Karl von Ossietzky was again arrested and sent to a concentration camp.

The judgment of the Reich High Court at the same time constituted a striking admission of German secret rearmament. The two men were sent to prison not because they had told lies, but because they had divulged the truth on rearmament. Thus Karl von Ossietzky, the sincere and intrepid pacifist who fell a victim to Nazism, was first deprived of his liberty by the democratic Weimar Republic. Food for thought, indeed.

#### *Republic's Increasing Armaments Expenditure*

The above incomplete picture will give a general idea of the methods employed by the German Republic to evade the vigilance of the Inter-Allied Commission and prepare the framework of rearmament. The European countries that facilitated this underground work must have bitterly regretted it since. The fruits of the ingenious work of the Republic and the naive complacency of Europe were garnered by Adolf Hitler.

The period of planning and preparation of prototypes extended approximately from 1924 till 1927. After the departure of the Inter-Allied Commission of Control there began the second phase of rearmament, during which German industry was adapted for the mass production of the prototypes prepared abroad. It required considerable reorganization to adapt the factories and provide them with modern machinery and specialist staffs. The enormous expenditure involved was defrayed by the Reichswehr and industry itself. The Reichswehr Ministry's own budget was increasing each year, and it also encroached on the budgets of other Ministries, in which rearmament items were camouflaged under innocent names.

The annual military budget of the Reich during the period from 1924 to 1932 was as follows :

				Reichswehr	Air	Police.
				(in millions of marks )		
1924	...	...	...	490	10	191
1925	...	...	...	633	44	194
1926	.	...	...	704	46	213
1927	..	...	...	759	46	206
1928	...	...	...	827	52	204
1929	..	...	...	752	38	199
1930	...	..	..	787	45	200
1931	...	...	...	759	45	191
1932	...	...	...	766	48	191
				6,477	374	1,789

In addition to the above, there were more or less camouflaged items in the budgets of other Ministries amounting to 350 millions per annum. These items sometimes bore innocent or expressly pacific designations, as :

" Reich Archives " (camouflage for the offices of the General Staff).

" Disarmament and Dismantling."

" Demobilisation." And so on

The camouflaged items during the period 1924-1932 totalled 3,219 million marks.

Thus, during the period in question, the Reich spent on armaments a total of 12,000 million marks—a tidy sum for a disarmed and pacific Republic.

The provision of funds for military expenditure was a regular practice. For instance, the Reich budget included an average of 200 million marks for the police. As the police was maintained by the States, not the Reich, these 200 millions were paid to the States by way of subsidy. They themselves provided about 700 millions per annum for their police forces, while the municipalities provided a further 100 millions. The Reich subsidy would have been entirely superfluous, had it not been destined for military purposes. As it was, the police forces of the States were abundantly supplied with armoured cars, troop transport lorries and other military material. A section of the police received air training.

The greater part of the police were under the control of the Prussian Government, with whose connivance they were given military training. Thus the Prussian Premier,

O. Braun (Socialist), and Severing, Prussian Minister of the Interior (also Socialist), bore a share of the responsibility for German rearmament.

The budgets of the Reich Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, National Economy, Labour, Transport and Finance, all contained several items destined for rearmament purposes.

The Universities, technical high schools and various associations also received large subsidies to forge ahead with the material and moral preparations for war. For instance, special University chairs were established to study the scientific problems of modern war.

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, if even in 1932 the Reich budget included items amounting to millions of marks as expenditure on . . . demobilisation (actually completed in 1919) and disarmament.

But the private undertakings, banks and industries also helped to finance rearmament. What is to-day universally known as the Luftwaffe, but was camouflaged by the Republic under the modest description of "air sport and transport," received hundreds of millions in private subsidies. Air rearmament was directed by the Air Department of the Ministry of Transport; this department was later transformed into a separate Ministry by Goering. In 1930 there were already 150 concerns working for this Department, to say nothing of the factories established abroad.

The industries, with the aid of foreign loans, could afford the luxury of developing the departments that were non-remunerative in peace time and could only pay in war time. That was why Germany was ahead of all other countries in the production of synthetic rubber and petrol, which she had begun already under the Republic.

This grandiose rearmament scheme was directed, under the supervision of the "Reich Archives" (the General Staff), by an economic General Staff camouflaged under the name of "*Normen Ausschuss der deutschen Industrie*." This institution was created in 1917 by the German industrialists for the purpose of standardizing production, and was used by the Reichswehr to centralize industrial rearmament. It was in close contact with the Association

of German Industries, and with the competent Government departments.

It was on the demand of this body that new factories were erected far from the frontier, and even right in the centre of the Reich; and it was also this body that encouraged the creation of the synthetic industries.

A keen observer would have been struck with the development of machine-tool production, which was indispensable for the rapid adaption of the factories for war production.

Whenever these preparations proved to be too costly for industry, the Reich came to its aid with liberal subsidies, running into millions. The list included the industrial firms whose production was necessary for total war, that is, the engineering and chemical industries, the shipyards, etc. It might be asked how this was possible under the Republic, seeing that the budgets were controlled by the Reichstag—how the Reichstag could vote from 1,200 to 1,500 millions per annum for armaments expenditure. But this is not a difficult question to answer in view of the virtual unanimity with which the Reichstag had voted the war loans during the war. Nationalism, thirsting for revenge, had blinded all the parties, from the German Nationals to the Catholics and from the Democrats to the Socialists.

Europe turned a blind eye, refusing to believe the revelations of an Ossietzky or a Foerster. But it did believe Stresemann, who had the audacity to say to the British Ambassador: "The talk about German arms factories in Russia is nonsense."<sup>1</sup>

Stresemann, whose personal popularity served as a cloak for the Reichswehr, must have spoken with his tongue in his cheek on June 29, 1927, when, on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, he said:

"Does the peace policy that is to be here rewarded express present developments in Germany? It might well be said that the answer is provided by the fact that the fundamental ideas of the German policy of understanding and of peace would not be practicable if they did not express the deepest longing of the national soul of Germany, the longing for peaceful international co-operation, in justice and in freedom."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. II, p. 272

<sup>2</sup> *G. Stresemann—His Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 496.

*German Bourgeois Parties and Russia—  
Lord d'Abernon's View*

To-day, when the facts of German-Soviet military collaboration are known, it is clear why the newspapers of the Right in Germany always supported the policy of friendship with Russia. Fear of Communism had been relegated to the background by the problem of rearmament. German *bourgeoisie* was able to subordinate its social fears to its thirst for revenge. It preferred to rearm the Soviet Union through rearming the Reich rather than defer this revenge. The feelings of German *bourgeoisie* in this connection are clearly reflected in the following random extracts from the German Press :

"Thus Germany's benevolent attitude towards the Soviet Union remains the most valuable 'asset' in counter-balancing the latter's total political isolation." (*Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 9, 1928.)

"We may even go further and affirm that we would in fact frankly congratulate ourselves to see the development of increasingly close relations between Germany and the Soviet Union." (*Koenigsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 6, 1928.)

"An anti-Russian policy is an anti-German policy." (Count Reventlow in the *Reichswarte*, April 11, 1930.)

General von Seeckt expressed the same sentiments in his book, *Wege deutscher Aussenpolitik* (Meyer, Leipzig, 1931) :

"Russia is in the first place pursuing world revolutionary aims. She is obliged to consider the representatives of the great capitalist Powers (France, Britain, and behind them, America) as the chief obstacles to her projects. From this emerges a certain community of interests between Russia and Germany, which are both menaced by the claims of these Powers."

While German *bourgeoisie* was for political reasons supporting German-Soviet military collaboration, some people in the Western countries were labouring under the illusion that Germany could be made into a bastion of the capitalist world against the Soviet Union. These people were prepared to make all kinds of concessions to the Reich, provided it undertook the mission of defending capitalism against the Communist peril. The Germans on their part were careful to foster this illusion, exaggerating the danger of Communism in Germany. They insisted that unless the Allies made concessions to her, Germany would be driven

to despair and fall a prey to Communism. But while talking about the Communist peril to the West, they actively collaborated with the Soviet-Union—with money borrowed from the West.

Before we leave this question, it will be of interest to re-read the following passages from the memoirs of Lord d'Abernon, British Ambassador in Berlin from 1920 till 1926:

"... Western civilisation was menaced by an external danger which, coming into being during the war, threatened a cataclysm equalled only by the fall of the Roman Empire.

"The danger arose from the sweeping success in 1917 of the revolution against the Czarist régime, and the establishment in Russia of a fanatical Communist Government, animated by hatred of all political organizations which stood in the way of a world victory of the Soviet creed. . . .

"... Public opinion both in France and Germany was so concentrated upon the Rhine frontier question that it relegated the vastly more important of the defence of Europe against Asiatic Communism to the category of the non-urgent. And yet there is little doubt that a grouping of the Allies against Germany would eventually have led to Germany being forced into close alliance with Russia. . . .

"... If the Western Allies continued to bully and to exercise pressure, there appeared to be no alternative for Germany other than the Russian connection. Already in 1923, at the time of the Ruhr occupation, a very shrewd observer in England had said that if he were directing the fortunes of Germany, the Russian alliance was the move with which he would parry excessive pressure by the Allies.

"What the ultimate consequences of such alliance would have been it is difficult to estimate, but this is certain—a ruthless struggle in Western Europe and a vast accession to the forces of disorder in Asia. An Asiatic revolt under the German direction against established institutions and supported by German industry and science may be considered an unnatural combination. But were it to come into being, the danger to European civilisation would be dire in the extreme. . . .

"... Resistance to Communistic propaganda, the maintenance of peace in Europe, the avoidance of another Great War, the establishment of security for respective frontiers, the preservation of society on existing lines, were capital objects of English policy. But there was more than this. England's stupendous and vital interests in Asia were menaced by a danger graver than any which existed in the time of the old Imperialistic régime in Russia. Hostility to England or jealousy of the intrusion of British civilisation into Asia was indeed of old standing. For the last seventy years of the nineteenth century, rivalry between England and Russia had been a dominant fact in history. But the Bolsheviks disposed of two weapons which Imperial Russia lacked—class-revolt propaganda, appealing to the proletariat of the world, and the quasi-religious fanaticism of Lenin, which infused a vigour and zeal unknown to the officials and emissaries of the Czar.

"In the presence of the menace of such forces no solution of the European problem could be tolerated by English statesmen which threatened the exclusion of Germany from the European combination and left her a prey to Russian wiles and Russian influence. As has already been pointed out, the policy of a perpetual confederation of the war Allies against Germany would indeed have been unwise on purely European grounds. But even if it had not been rejected on this basis, no statesman capable of taking a broad view of English world-interests could have hesitated to reject it.

"The security of the French frontier against German attack was indeed of vast importance to England, but this security must not be purchased at the cost of a prolongation of war animosities, if by doing so Germany was driven to support the already dangerous power of Russia in the East. The joint interest of the Allies was to discover some line of policy which would secure the French frontier without exposing Western Europe to the danger of German defection. It might at first sight appear that the attitude of England, if based on these considerations, was tinged with selfishness and was ungenerous to our war Allies and particularly to France. But such an accusation would be superficial and would not resist close examination. . .

"Germany must be brought into the association of Western Powers on a basis of equality. The 'Mad Dog of Europe' theory must be abandoned and the relations of Victor and Vanquished resulting from the Great war must be dismissed from the mind. The future must take precedence of the past, recrimination and suspicion must cease.

"The task of propagating these ideas was not easy. In 1922 and 1923, opinion in England and France had scarcely advanced beyond the bitterness of the war period. Germany was still regarded as the permanent danger, the ruthless destroyer of European peace, the constant military menace which could only be held in check by the allied combination of all the peaceful forces of Europe.

"The conceptions prevalent as to the respective strength on the two sides were not only coloured by memories of the war, but went further back, and were based on the position as it was in 1914. It was vain to point out that the distribution of military force had altered completely since that time, that Germany was, in point of military material effectively disarmed, while France in a military sense—with her allies of the Little Entente—dominated the Continent.

"It was only by slow degrees that public opinion became aware of the altered position. . .<sup>1</sup>

### *German Propaganda—Stresemann on the Small Countries and the British Empire*

We need to add only one comment: Even Hitler, in 1939, preferred an agreement with the Soviet Union to peaceful collaboration with the Western countries on the

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon. Vol. 1., pp. 20-24.

basis of respect for the rights of others ; yet he was the most anti-Communitistic German it is possible to imagine.

One cannot help comparing Lord d'Abernon's reveries with the following German conception of foreign policy :

" Foreign policy is and remains the art of playing with hidden cards, the strong national will being concealed behind an impenetrable mask " (*Tag*, May 26, 1927 )

The mask was represented by German propaganda, which had assumed formidable dimensions. For instance, a special centre had been created to prove Germany's innocence of the last war. This centre published books, tracts and periodicals. Some of the tracts were published in anything from 500,000 to 2,500,000 copies. The centre was connected with thirty-nine German Press agencies and 1,500 German daily newspapers, and exerted an influence on 170 foreign journals. In 1926, it spent 15,000 marks on postage stamps alone. These figures indicate the extent of the German Republic's propaganda in other spheres, as in those of disarmament, colonies, Reparations and the so-called Polish Corridor.

The Germans were hoping to play not only on the anti-Communist sentiment, but also on the pacifism of the democracies. " In my heart," said a secondary school headmaster, named Reimann, at a war responsibility congress held on July 6, 1927, " I am hostile to pacifism, for our youth must preserve its virile and martial spirit, but the foreign pacifists are our best allies."

In order to convince the foreign world that Germany was democratic, and although in 1927 the Government comprised only the bourgeois parties, Stresemann, in September of that year, saw to it that the German delegation to the Assembly of the League of Nations should include representatives of all the important parties, and therefore also of the Socialist Party. Breitscheid (Socialist) and Mgr. Kaas (Centre) were paying the visit to Geneva with Bernstorff (Democrat), Freiherr von Rheinbaben (People's Party) and Hoetzsch (German National). Thus every foreign circle in Geneva found one man in the German delegation who held opinions similar to its own—a Socialist, a Catholic prelate, a Liberal and some Conservatives. What the foreigners could not see was the bond that united them—German nationalism.



While these German delegates were endeavouring to arouse sympathy for the Republic, President Hindenburg (on September 18) made a speech at Tannenberg, in which the following occurred :

"The accusation that Germany was responsible for this, the greatest of all wars, we, and all Germans of all ranks, unanimously repudiate. It was not envy, hatred, or the lust of conquest that put the weapons into our hand. The war was, for us, the ultimate means, involving the heaviest sacrifices from the whole nation, of maintaining ourselves against a world of enemies"<sup>1</sup>

Stresemann, when asked about this in Geneva, replied simply : "What he said at Tannenberg . . . all this is a common conviction among all Germans."<sup>2</sup> Thus Germany was protesting her innocence as regards the first world war while actually preparing for the second.

In an entry he made in his diary in October 1927, on his impressions of Geneva, Stresemann sounded a note reminiscent of that of Imperial Germany. It was contempt for the small nations—the same that had led to the violation of Belgian neutrality :

"There are States with which we are at odds, and which could not be in any case our natural allies. . . . It is thus my opinion that the interests of Germany do not coincide with those of the small Powers. . . ."<sup>3</sup> And a little farther on came this rather ungracious and ungrateful remark about Lord d'Abernon's country : "The British Empire is beginning to crack a little."<sup>4</sup>

*Osthilfe—Hindenburg becomes Prussian Junker Again—*  
*"A Nation will be Judged and Weighed by the*  
*Personality who Stands at its Head"*

On December 21, 1927, the Reich Government and the (partly Socialist) Prussian Government held a joint meeting, with Hindenburg in the chair, and decided to organize special aid for Eastern Germany. The direct aim was the economic strengthening of the German element in East Prussia as against the Polish minority by means of subsidies, and prevention of the exodus of Eastern Germans to the industrialised central and western provinces, which were richer and offered more possibilities of lucrative employ-

<sup>1</sup> G. Stresemann—*His Diaries*, Vol. III., p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

ment. This was the beginning of the scandalous *Osthilfe*, which enabled the Prussian landowners to dip into the coffers of the Reich and of Prussia, and enrich themselves on the pretext of a struggle against the German citizens of Polish origin. The scandal reached its peak in 1932. The financial aid in question was to consist chiefly in mortgage and other loans to agriculture and in the reduction of public charges. The Junkers, who had freed themselves of their debts during the inflation, were thus afforded an opportunity to profit by the easy money arising from the afflux of foreign loans. They enriched themselves quickly—and the Socialists in the Prussian Government co-operated with the Reich Government to make this possible. The Prussian Socialists were generously repaid in 1932, when a Reich Government relying on the same Prussian landowners drove them out of their ministerial offices *manu militari*.

The joint *Osthilfe* meeting of the two Governments was presided over by Hindenburg. One might wonder why the Socialist members of the Prussian Government agreed to participate in it, but it is less surprising that the Reich President should have wanted to take the chair, for since October 1927 he was one of the Prussian landowning class which was to be the principal beneficiary of the *Osthilfe*. The Junkers had seized the occasion of his eightieth birthday (October 2, 1927) to make him a truly princely gift and thereby identify him with the interests of their own class. The gift was the Neudeck estate, which had formerly belonged to Hindenburg's ancestors, and which his personal friend, Oldenburg-Januschau, and other big landowners had bought for him with the aid of heavy industry, and was presented to him as a gift "from the nation" to the President. When the idea of purchasing Neudeck was first conceived by the *Landbund* (the organization of the Prussian Junkers), the President's son undertook to negotiate with the landowners on behalf of his father. He demanded that the country house at Neudeck should be transformed into a mansion worthy of his father, that it should be luxuriously furnished, and that the estate should be liberally provided with livestock. The *Landbund* failed to collect the sum required to meet Oskar von Hindenburg's demands and made an urgent appeal to the industrialists,

bankers and big businessmen. With some pressure from the Government, the possessing classes managed to collect what was needed—a million marks. On October 2, 1927, Oldenburg-Januschau was able to present to his old friend, the President, the title deeds of Neudeck which, however, were registered in the name of Oskar—to save death duties after his father's death. The payment of charges due on the transaction at the time was deferred by the Government *sine die*. Thus the President of the Republic, the incorruptible Hindenburg, had accepted a princely gratuity from Germany's possessing classes. Thenceforth the two Hindenburgs, father and son, had an admirable understanding for the interests and troubles of their colleagues, the agrarians across the Elbe. The gift was made in October 1927; Hindenburg inaugurated the *Osthilfe* in December of the same year.

This did not prevent the Reichstag's Socialist Speaker, Loebe, from unveiling the busts of Hindenburg and Ebert in the hall of the Reichstag and paying homage to Hindenburg in these terms: "From the day of his accession to office he has acted as the representative of the whole nation and not as the spokesman of a party, and he has always raised his voice on behalf of conciliation and compromise." Stresemann, on the occasion of Hindenburg's eightieth birthday, quoted Treitschke's saying: "A nation will be judged and weighed by the personality who stands at its head." The application of this reflection of the famous German historian to the Republic speaks more eloquently than any commentary.

*Return of Socialists into Reich Government — Hermann Mueller becomes Chancellor—Increasing Autonomy for Reichswehr*

The year 1928 brought a Government crisis that led to the formation of a new Government with a Socialist Chancellor. The disagreement in the Marx Government arose from an education law. The Catholic Centre's wishes in connection with it conflicted with those of the other Government parties and particularly the People's Party, which remained faithful to the traditions of the *Kultur-*

*kampf* and was against a possible extension of Catholic influence on the schools. In reality the problem was not serious enough to justify the disruption of the bourgeois coalition. But Stresemann seized upon it as a pretext to get rid of the German Nationals and replace them in the Government by the Socialists. He needed this change in order to strengthen the impression abroad that Germany had remained profoundly democratic and was in fact evolving towards the Left. Foreign confidence was indispensable for the achievement of two immediate aims : revision of the Dawes Plan, so that international control of German economic life might be removed, and complete evacuation of the Rhineland by the Allies. We may recall at this point what Stresemann had written to his friend the ex-Crown Prince on September 7, 1925 :

"The burden of Reparations laid upon us by the Dawes Plan will probably be unendurable by 1927. We shall then have to call a new conference for a fresh estimate of German capacity to pay. . . . The most important thing for the first task of German policy mentioned above is the liberation of German soil from any occupying force. We must get the stranglehold off our neck. . . ."

During 1928, Stresemann worked unremittingly to achieve these aims ; he succeeded in 1929. But it was necessary that his negotiations with the Allies should not be disturbed by the noisy interventions of the German Nationals, who were again evolving towards intransigence. Stresemann got rid of them by means of behind-the-scenes intrigues.

The Government crisis came to a head in February. On March 31, the Reichstag was dissolved. The new elections took place in May, with the following result :

Socialists	...	..	153 mandates	—	before :	131
German Nationals		..	78	"	—	103
Centre	...	...	62	"	—	69
People's Party	..	..	45	"	—	51
Communists	..		54	"	—	45
Democrats	...	...	25	"	—	32
Other Bourgeois	...		32	"	—	23
National Socialists		..	12	"	—	14

The result of the elections was in accordance with Stresemann's wishes, the Socialists having gained at the expense of the parties of the extreme Right. On June 12, Chancellor Marx resigned. He was replaced by Hermann

Mueller, the leader of the Socialists, who, on June 29, formed the following Government :

Stresemann (People's Party)	Foreign Affairs.
Dr Curtius (People's Party)	Industry and Commerce.
General Groener	Reichswehr.
Dr Schaetzel (Bavarian People's Party)	Postal Services.
Severing (Socialist)	Interior.
Dr Hilferding (Socialist)	Finance.
Wissel (Socialist)	Labour.
Dietrich-Baden (Democrat)	Supply.
Erich Koch (Democrat)	Justice.
von Guérard (Centre)	Communications.

It is interesting to note that the Reichswehr left Stresemann a free hand and did not prevent him from bringing the Socialists into the Government. It was hoping to gain, at this price, freedom of movement in the West through the evacuation of the Rhineland, so the game was worth the candle. However, in order to make more sure of its independence of the Government, the Reichswehr had the faithful Dr Gessler, who was after all a civilian, replaced by a general already on January 19, 1928. It was on that date that Hindenburg appointed General von Groener, former Chief of the General Staff, Reichswehr Minister in the Marx Government, and he retained the post under Chancellor Mueller. From then on no civilian was entitled to look into the affairs of the Reichswehr. It was now dependent only on three generals—Marshal von Hindenburg as Reich President, General von Groener as Reichswehr Minister, and General von Heye as Commander-in-Chief. Its complete autonomy had been consummated, and was maintained when the Socialists returned to power.

Stresemann paid the Reichswehr the following tribute :

" In the Reichswehr, a small armed force, the German Reich is provided with an instrument that, as General Heye says, true to its sworn oath, means to be an instrument of the Reich, that makes great demands on those that belong to it, and will do so increasingly in the future. . . " <sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately for Europe, Stresemann was a true prophet : the Reichswehr proved equal to the task allotted to it by the Reich. And while paying tribute to it, Stresemann at the same time lifted a corner of the veil that concealed from the rest of the world the true character and task of the Reichswehr. On April 1, 1928, speaking of Bismarck,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

his other favourite hero besides Frederick the Great, he said :

"Let us celebrate Bismarck's memory by making the great idea of his life, devotion to the Fatherland, the guiding star of our own lives. Each of us in the place where he can do his best work. Each of us is responsible for helping the country to rise again to that greatness for which Bismarck, who also knew an Olmuetz, prepared the way."<sup>1</sup>

There was menace behind these words, for Bismarck's greatness after the defeat of Olmuetz was made up of victories over Denmark, Austria and France ; the similar greatness to which Stresemann was alluding could only have implied revenge for the defeat of 1918.

*Monseigneur Kaas — Austrian Affairs—  
Reichstag Speaker, Loebe*

Although it would be difficult to accuse Stresemann of a lack of nationalist sentiment, he could never satisfy some of his compatriots, those who wanted to scorch along and demolish the Versailles Treaty at a single stroke. Even Mgr. Kaas, leader of the Catholic Centre, disapproved of Stresemann's prudence and spoke in the Reichstag of the undeniable failure of German foreign policy. At the end of his speech he emphasised that "The dynamic of the German attitude must under certain circumstances be altered . . ." One wonders whether Mgr. Kaas was satisfied with the dynamic of Germany's attitude later on when he contemplated it from his refuge at the Vatican, and whether he has realized how dangerous it was to excite the nationalism of his compatriots, who wanted nothing better than to march across the European frontiers to the sound of "Deutschland ueber Alles."

Stresemann never relaxed his attention as regards Austrian affairs ; he was convinced that time was working for the *Anschluss*. But Mgr. Seipel, the Austrian Chancellor, was not a man to be trifled with—a fact that was deplored by Reichstag Speaker Loebe as much as by Stresemann himself. For Loebe was an ardent advocate of the *Anschluss*. Like a good German Socialist, he was nationalist to the marrow, and there was a profound under-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

standing between him and Stresemann, even as regards the adulation of Bismarck :

" Calling on me before leaving for Riga and Reval," wrote Stresemann in his diary on January 8, 1928, " Speaker Loebe, after hearty good wishes for the New Year, said that since Bismarck's day there had been no Foreign Minister so highly regarded as myself. The reference to Bismarck in the mouth of a Socialist leader is very interesting as showing an altered view of Bismarck's policy " <sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of 1928 there were rumours that Mgr. Seipel intended to propose that the seat of the League of Nations should be transferred from Geneva to Vienna with a view to strengthening Austrian independence. Stresemann was perturbed, and on February 18 he wrote to Loebe :

" The question of Vienna has caused me a great deal of uneasiness . . . You will surely remember our talk on the occasion of the performance of ' The Weavers ' at the Schauspielhaus . . . I was attracted by the idea that it perhaps might be possible with the help of the Austro-German National Association and with your help to make a very striking demonstration in Vienna, in which several hundred thousand people would take part, in order to prove that they were Germans and supporters of the *Anschluss*. But the news I have received regarding the intentions of the Austrian Chancellor, Herr Seipel, is indeed disquieting. . . . Hence Seipel's statement that it was a matter of course that, so long as the League had its seat in Vienna, the question of the *Anschluss* could not be raised. . . " <sup>2</sup> A few days later, he again wrote to Loebe : " The only thing that surprises me in this situation is that your friends, and especially the Greater Germans, have not protested violently against such a scheme. . . " <sup>3</sup>

" Your friends . . . the Greater Germans "—so these were the political friends of Herr Loebe, the prominent German Socialist.

*The Pact of Paris—Revision of Dawes Plan—  
Stresemann Bangs the Table with his Fist*

In August 1928, Stresemann went to Paris where, on the 27th, representatives of all the Powers of the world signed the famous pact renouncing war—the Kellogg Pact. Stresemann was received in Paris with enthusiasm. As he was leaving the railway station there were cheers and cries of " Vive Stresemann ! " and " Vive la Paix ! " Mr Stanley

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 355-356.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357.

Baldwin, then British Prime Minister, was right in describing Stresemann as a political genius. It required genius, indeed, for him to get himself acclaimed in Paris as an apostle of peace, when both before and during the war he had been a member of the Pan-German Association, which was responsible for the militarist and bellicose agitation before 1914. Lord Baldwin was right; but Lord Asquith was not far wrong, either, when he warned Sir Austen Chamberlain against "this typical Junker."

During his stay in Paris, Stresemann prepared the terrain for the revision of the Dawes Plan and the evacuation of the Rhineland. He had a friendly reception not only from Briand, the French Foreign Minister, but also from Poincaré, the Premier, who had passed through a considerable evolution since his Ruhr policy and had become converted to the idea that the German Republic ought to be trusted. However, a remnant of suspicion caused Poincaré to mention to Stresemann a report he had received from Mr Wickham Steed, who had talked with University professors in Berlin and had found that they were all in favour of a *revanche*. Stresemann was badly embarrassed, for he dared not deny the truth of the report.

His conversations with Briand were very successful, for Briand assured him that the French Parliament was not hostile to the idea of the evacuation of the Rhineland, and promised him to envisage the evacuation of the whole of the Rhineland, that is, both the second and third zones, at the same time.

The question of the revision of the Dawes Plan progressed more slowly. Germany claimed that her capacity to pay was not equal to the Reparations burden as determined by the Plan, yet in the following December she was in a position to undertake to grant the U.S.S.R. further large credits for the development of Soviet industry<sup>1</sup>; we already know the reason for the liberality of the Reichswehr and the Reich Government in their financial policy with Russia—it was a matter of developing the factories that served German rearmament.

The negotiations were continued at Geneva in September, at the League Assembly. Stresemann, being then ill, his place as head of the German delegation was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 369



taken by Chancellor Hermann Mueller. The representatives of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Japan decided to start official negotiations on the evacuation of the Rhineland and to appoint a Committee of Experts to study the revision of the Dawes Plan. This Committee was appointed in January 1929, and included, in addition to the experts of the six interested Powers, two Americans—Owen D. Young and J. Pierpont Morgan.

Stresemann was always very active at Geneva on the minorities question. Once, at the meeting of the League Council in 1928, he lost control of himself, and in the course of reply to the Polish Foreign Minister, banged the table with his fist. For once the Prussian had broken through the veneer of the diplomat. He was carried away so violently that he let fall some rather imprudent words. The Polish Minister had accused the leader of the German minority in Upper Silesia, a Herr Ulitz, of a lack of loyalty to the Polish State. Stresemann said :

" You say that Herr Ulitz would probably be indicted for high treason if he were not a Deputy. We will not here investigate the question of high treason. The love of a man's native country and high treason are feelings that often lie very close together. I know some very estimable persons who, when confronted by a decision, have let themselves be guided rather by their personal feelings than by a due consideration for the State " <sup>1</sup>

The penultimate sentence applies perfectly to those Germans who, being citizens of other European countries, facilitated the invasion of those countries by Hitler's armies, and to the members of the American-German Bund who have been tried in the United States for aiding Germany against the interests of the United States, the country whose hospitality they were enjoying. Stresemann absolved all these Germans in advance.

### *The Prussian Government and the Socialists*

The Socialists returned to the Reich Government only after four years in Opposition, where they had been relegated by the formation of the bourgeois bloc. Nevertheless, it cannot be asserted that they were not responsible for the state of affairs then prevailing in Germany. They had

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

been in charge of the most important State Government, that of Prussia, whose competence extended to half the Reich, without interruption since 1918, and they had also been the leaders of the Governments of Baden, Hesse and Hamburg, while several towns had Socialist mayors.

The Prussian Government had always been based on what was called the Weimar coalition, composed of Socialists, Catholic Centre and Democrats. The most influential Ministers were Otto Braun, the Premier, and Grzesinski, the Minister of the Interior. It might be asked why the Catholic Centre, which since 1922 had been resolutely evolving towards the Right, had supported the bourgeois coalitions in the Reichstag and had collaborated in the Reich Government even with the German Nationals, nevertheless remained faithful to the Weimar coalition as regards Prussia. But this is not a difficult question to answer.

The Centre was deliberately pursuing a dual policy—coalition with the Right for Reich affairs, and coalition with the Socialists for Prussian affairs. Under the monarchy Prussia had been governed by Protestants from across the Elbe; the Catholic provinces of Upper Silesia, Westphalia and the Rhineland had been administered by Protestant officials. The Revolution enabled the Catholic Centre to change this state of affairs, and the administration of the Catholic provinces passed to officials in sympathy with the Centre. But the change had been possible only with the support of the Socialists, who willingly recognised Catholic priority in the Catholic provinces. A bourgeois bloc in Prussia might have reversed the situation and have replaced the Catholic officials with Protestants belonging to the other bourgeois parties, as the German National or the People's Party.

On the other hand, as regards foreign affairs, economic and social policy and, last not least, the Reichswehr, the Centre was entirely in agreement with the other bourgeois parties, and that was why it supported the purely bourgeois Reich Governments.

Thanks to this ingenious reckoning of the Centre, the Socialists were able to stay in power in Prussia from 1918 until the day when they were driven from their posts by the Reichswehr. At the same time, this continuous Socialist

participation in the Prussian Government was not calculated to increase the confidence of the working masses. The memory of the Socialist leaders' equivocal attitude during and after the Revolution had not been dissipated, while on the other hand, the fact that the Prussian administration, and particularly the police, was controlled by the Socialists, could not but increase the distrust. For the administration continued to be composed for the greater part of the old Prussian officials, who were devoted body and soul to the old régime. The police, with the consent of the Minister Grzesinski and his successor Severing, had been placed under the control of the Reichswehr, which was giving it a purely military training, with a view to increasing its own effectives that were to serve as *cadres* of the future national army. This militarised police was imbued with the same spirit as the Reichswehr, and was used as an instrument to suppress labour discontent. Already Grzesinski's predecessor, Wolfgang Heine, also a Socialist, had conceived the idea of organizing the Prussian police as shock troops against the Spartacists and other independent workers.

"Ever since those unfortunate days" wrote a German author,<sup>1</sup> "the criminal police who waged war upon crime, the police on point duty in the streets, and the police officials who sat in the police offices discharging the multitudinous tasks arising from ordinary routine happenings, had ceased to be typical members of the Prussian police force. Their place, as the embodiment of the Prussian police in the eyes of the public, had been taken by companies of policemen armed with every form of modern weapon, highly organized and disciplined on a military model, who remained in barracks awaiting the order to quell disturbances. It is beyond human capacity to introduce democratic ideas and traditions into a body of men trained to shoot down rebellious workers. The officers of the police force imitated the Reichswehr officers in their manners and opinions."

This state of affairs led to some deplorable consequences. For instance, on May 1, 1929, the Berlin workers wanted to organize the usual public demonstrations. The police were ordered to disperse the processions and opened fire on the workers, killing twenty-five and severely injuring thirty-six. Such incidents were bound to confuse the workers, for at that date the Reich Chancellor was Hermann Mueller, the Reich Minister of the Interior, Severing, the Prussian Premier, Otto Braun, and the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Grzesinski—all Socialists.

<sup>1</sup> A. Rosenberg: *A History of the German Republic*, pp. 255-256

After the fusillade that had cost so many Berlin workers their lives, Grzesinski (who was twice Berlin's Police President—May 1925-October 1926, and November 1930-July 1932) took severe measures against the Communist Press and organizations. On May 3, 1929, the following official notice was published in the Berlin Press :

" Notice from the Police President : ' The Police President, by virtue of Sub-sections 4 and 21 of Section 7 of the Law for the Protection of the Republic, has suspended the newspapers *Die Rote Fahne* and *Volksecho* for a period of three weeks until May 23 inclusive, because these newspapers have, by their tone, actively supported the endeavour of the German Communist Party to undermine the Reich's Republican form of government established by the Constitution.' "

On May 6, Grzesinski sent the following letter to the *Rote Frontkämpfer Bund* :

" The Prussian Minister of the Interior, II. 1420. V.  
Berlin, May 6, 1929.

" To the Secretariat of the R.F.B

" By virtue of Section 14, in conjunction with Sub-sections 4 and 5 of Section 7 of the Law for the Protection of the Republic, and by virtue of Section 2 of the Reich Law of Association of April 19, 1908, in conjunction with Section 129 of the Reich Penal Code, the '*Rote Frontkämpferbund e. V.*,' including the *Rote Jungfront* and the *Rote Marine*, together with all its institutions, is hereby, with the consent of the Reich Government,<sup>1</sup> dissolved in the territory of the Prussian Free State, because its attitude shows that its aims conflict with the said Laws. The property of the organisations affected will be sequestered and confiscated for the benefit of the Reich in accordance with Section 18 of the Law for the Protection of the Republic and Section 7 of the Law of March 22, 1921. The execution of the sequestration and confiscation shall be effected by the local police authorities."

(Signed) Grzesinski.

The Prussian Police President went even further than his Minister, and on May 4, he decreed measures not against the Communists, but against the inhabitants of the working class districts of Berlin. Here is the relevant decree :

" In order to pacify the centres of unrest at Wedding and Neukoelln, where further severe fighting occurred last evening and night, I have ordered the following measures :

" Between the hours of 9 p.m. and 4 a.m. all traffic in the streets mentioned below is prohibited. The only exceptions are doctors, midwives and ambulance men. There must be no loitering on doorsteps, in porches and at corners. Windows looking on the streets must remain

<sup>1</sup> The Reich Government included four Socialists : Chancellor Mueller, Severing, Hilferding, and Wissel.

closed during the said hours. There must also be no lights during these hours in rooms facing the streets. Inhabitants infringing these orders will be exposing themselves to the risk of having their windows fired on by the police.

"During the day no person is allowed to linger in the said districts and streets, or on balconies, at corners or in entrances. The police have special orders to see that no one should remain in the streets longer than is absolutely necessary. Persons walking in the street without a definite destination will be arrested. Three or more persons must not walk together. Cycling is prohibited. Public houses and restaurants situated in the said districts will close at 9 p.m.

"Persons infringing these orders will do so at the peril of their lives.

The Police President,  
(Signed) Zoergiebel."

The decree produced its consequences. The police fired on workers found in the street after 9 p.m. and there were a number of killed and injured.

The energy with which the Socialists fought the workers of Berlin and the organizations of the extreme Left, was commented on by the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, a Right-wing paper (May 4, 1929) as follows :

"We may remind our readers of the words of Napoleon that each rebel killed means 100,000 citizens saved. If instead of several hundred arrests and only a few (!) killed, the proportion had been reversed, the middle classes could have had confidence in the present Government. . . ."

The importance of militarisation of the police to the Reichswehr was revealed in December 1942, in an article published by S.S. Gruppenfuehrer Bracht in the periodical *Deutsche Verwaltung*. Bracht wrote that under the Republican régime the police forces of the different German States had been secretly unified, fifty-four per cent., or 96,000 men, being trained in the same way as the officers of the regular army. Goering had them transferred to the Wehrmacht, thereby enormously facilitating the creation of thirty-five divisions in 1935. Of these former police officers, eighty-nine have attained the rank of major-general, forty that of lieutenant-general, and six that of full general.

The Socialists were not making themselves popular by their conduct of municipal affairs either. The bourgeois masters, town councillors and officials frequently drew very high salaries, which were in crass contrast with the incomes of workers and intellectuals. Some Socialist municipal officials drew a salary of 50,000 marks gold per

annum, and this could not but provoke the working masses, who on the one hand observed the luxurious life of some Socialists, and on the other were frequently confronted by the armoured cars of a police force controlled by the Socialists.

This unfavourable impression was further intensified by the Socialists' participation in the Reich Government. They stayed in it for two years, until they were again discarded by the bourgeois parties, as in 1920 and 1923, always at a moment when their presence in the Government no longer seemed necessary to the bourgeois parties. During those two years they made no attempt to settle social problems of the first importance, as land reform in Prussia or the restoration of the eight-hour day. They also made no attempt to master the Reichswehr and give it a more democratic face, just as they failed to intervene in the matter of rearmament, though the pertinent facts had been made public by one of their colleagues—Scheide-mann—already in 1926. They allowed themselves to be led into pursuing a conservative policy, screening the responsibility of the bourgeois parties and above all producing an alibi of a democratic Germany when the withdrawal of the Allied troops from the Rhineland was negotiated. When in 1930 these troops had withdrawn, the Socialists were requested to withdraw from the Reich Government. On the other hand, Hermann Mueller's Government did not hesitate to give the order to start work on the pocket battleship "A," the first of the series, or to approve the re-election of Schacht as Governor of the Reichsbank, though he had long ceased to be a member of the Democratic Party and no longer concealed his reactionary views. The workers were completely at sea, the more so as the Socialist Ministers were associated in the Government with members of the People's Party, which was the mouthpiece of heavy industry. Thyssen on the other hand praised the Socialists for their opportunism. "The Social-Democratic Party consisted of reasonable and moderate people," he wrote,<sup>1</sup> though there was mild reproach in his further remark: "If the Social Democrats had been a little more nationalistic . . ."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I Paid Hitler*, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Thyssen quotes Ebert as having said in November 1918: "I detest revolution as I detest sin." The German workers who made the Revolution in order to place Ebert at the head of the Reich would have been puzzled to hear him.

*Hitler Reorganizes his Party with Financial Aid  
from the Industrialists*

While the Socialists were continuing with their opportunist policy, the National Socialists reappeared on the scene and took advantage of the puzzlement of the masses. They offered a social program that seemed almost audacious as compared with the timidity of the Socialists; their noisy and aggressive nationalism did not frighten the masses because the Socialists had also been trying to appear as nationalistic as possible, and had never tried to preach understanding with Germany's neighbours or to convince the workers that peace within the existing frontiers—those of Versailles—was better than a war of revenge.

On December 20, 1924, Hitler was amnestied by the Bavarian Government. His detention, which began on November 12, 1923, had lasted only thirteen months. When he came out of prison he saw that the racist movement had disintegrated, with its several organizations now collaborating, now fighting each other. There were about ten racist parties, the most important being the "Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitspartei" in North Germany, with von Graefe, Wulle and Count Reventlow; the "Völkischer Block in Bayern" in South Germany, with Gregor Strasser as its leader; and the "Nationalsozialistische Freiheitsbewegung," led by Ludendorff, Gregor Strasser and von Graefe.

At the elections of May 4, 1924, these organizations formed a single bloc and polled 1,924,000 votes, sending thirty-two Deputies to the Reichstag. But the leaders failed to agree among themselves, and at the elections of December 7, 1924, they won only fourteen seats.

Hitler buckled down to gather all the racists into a single party. On February 27, 1925, at a meeting in Munich, he re-formed the National Socialist Party. Julius Streicher, Gottfried Feder, Hermann Eisner, Dr Frick, Rudolf Hess and Max Amann, were the first to rally round Hitler. Soon

after this the other racist organizations dissolved one by one, and their members joined the National Socialist Party. Captain Ernest Roehm, who on May 14, 1924, was elected to the Reichstag, and on May 30 of the same year founded a new racist association—*Frontbann*—also ended up, after some attempts at independence, by joining the National Socialists—just like Gregor Strasser, a pharmacist by profession, who had joined the National Socialist Party in February 1921. G. Strasser took part in the Munich putsch. In April 1924 he was elected Deputy to the Prussian Diet, and thenceforth devoted himself to racist propaganda in North Germany. With his brother Otto he edited *Berliner Arbeiter-Zeitung*, an anti-Semitic paper. In 1925 both accepted Hitler's supreme authority, and Gregor was appointed Nazi propaganda chief, thus becoming the predecessor of Goebbels. By the end of 1925 the National Socialist Party already numbered 27,000 members. However, Hitler did not succeed in completely seizing the effective direction of the Party until the beginning of 1926, because Gregor Strasser, despite his submission, tried to play the role of an autonomous kinglet in North Germany. But in the end he, as well as Graefe and von Reventlow, was obliged to submit. On May 26, 1926, the General Meeting of the Party recognised Hitler as the indisputable leader, reaffirming the famous twenty-five Points as its program. On November 1 of the same year, Gregor Strasser was relieved of his post as leader of the racials in the North, his place being taken by his former collaborator, Dr Goebbels. In January 1927, Gregor Strasser also lost his post as propaganda chief and was given a more obscure one, becoming head of the department charged with the organization of the struggle against the existing régime. The paper of the Strasser brothers was soon eclipsed in Berlin by the *Angriff*, which was founded by Goebbels on July 4, 1927. By about the end of 1927 the united Party already had 72,000 members.

At the elections of May 20, 1928, the National Socialists polled 809,000 votes and won twelve seats, one of which belonged to Hermann Goering.

The S.S. and S.A. reappeared. The National Socialists were reorganized with a view to launching an attack against the Republic. Meanwhile, Otto Braun, the Prussian



Premier, spoke of Hitler with contempt. "He is a hysterical person," he said, "an excitable fellow incapable of consistent action and he will never come into power." The Prussian Government drew practical conclusions from this view—on September 28, 1928, it raised the ban on public speaking that had been directed against Hitler; though, as already mentioned, on May 3 of the following year, it dissolved the Red Front Fighters' League.

However, at the Fourth Congress of the National Socialist Party, held in Nuremberg in 1929, the S.A. alone numbered 60,000 men; the Party was developing very rapidly.

But the purchase of newspapers and uniforms and arms for the S.A. and the S.S., and the acquisition of premises for the Party departments, was costing a great deal of money. Where did it come from? Thyssen, the Rhineland industrialist, answered this question publicly in the title of his book, *I Paid Hitler!* Yes, the funds were provided by the industrialists, who saw in National Socialism the instrument that would enable them to take the direction of the Reich's affairs entirely into their own hands. Thyssen was not the only one; far from it.

The barons of industry began by financing various semi-military organizations soon after 1918.

"To combat political radicalism and the anarchical tendencies which became rife in the early years of the Weimar Republic, I supported various semi-military patriotic formations, among them the National Socialist Party."<sup>1</sup>

But Thyssen observes, and rightly, that the semi-military organizations soon after the Revolution owed their existence not only to the subsidies from industry, but also to the support of the Government, which was at that time Socialist.

"Groups commanded by former army officers were being formed here and there as a check to the element of disorder. They were called 'free corps.' The Government more or less tolerated them, for the Socialist members of the Government of the Reich, and especially Gustav Noske, the Reichswehr Minister, were convinced that it was necessary to erect a solid barrier against the rising flood of anarchy if the country was to be brought back to work. Ebert himself, destined to become President of the German Republic later on, was far from being an extremist. It was due to his personal influence and the complete

harmony existing between him and Field Marshal von Hindenburg (his eventual successor as President), throughout these difficult years, that the army was able to contribute to the rebirth of discipline and the sense of order in Germany.”<sup>1</sup>

Thyssen belonged to the German National Party, and became a member of the Nazi Party officially only in 1931. But he had made contact with the Nazis, on General Ludendorff's recommendation, already in October 1923. He had conversations with Ludendorff and Hitler with a view to organizing an expedition against the Socialist Government of Saxony and later overthrowing the Weimar régime. Following the example of Herr Minnoux, collaborator of Stinnes, Thyssen gave the Nazi Party 100,000 marks gold. “This was my first contribution to the National Socialist Party.”<sup>2</sup> Although this money was given to finance the counter-revolution, Thyssen modestly observes in his book: “I did not wish to mix in politics.”

This same man, in 1925, was entrusted with the mission of preaching in Paris Franco-German economic *rapprochement*. As we have seen, Briand was subjugated by the charm of this “pacifist and democrat,” who went so far in his duplicity that he was one of the founders of the Franco-German Association.

After the reorganization of the National Socialist Party, Thyssen and his colleagues resumed their collaboration with it. In 1928 Rudolf Hess was the intermediary between his Party and Thyssen and Kirdorff, the latter being Managing Director of the Rhineland-Westphalian coal syndicate. It was with their money that the Nazis in 1928 purchased the Brown House, which became their general headquarters. Kirdorff was a member of the National Socialist Party. The liberality of the industrialists with the Nazis may be gauged from the following two admissions of Thyssen:

“I have personally given altogether one million marks to the National Socialist Party.”<sup>3</sup> All in all, the amounts given by heavy industry to the Nazis may be estimated at two million marks a year. It must be understood, however, that this includes only the voluntary gifts, and not the various sums which the industrial enterprises were obliged (*sic.*) to provide for the Party's numerous special manifestations.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Thyssen mentions the big industrialist, Albert Voegler (Ruhr Steel Works), the famous Cologne banker, Schroeder, and even the piano manufacturer, Carl Bechstein, among those who subsidised the Nazis.<sup>1</sup>

The subsidies of heavy industry, which during the first years after the Revolution supported the so-called patriotic organizations, went chiefly to the Nazis and the German National semi-military organizations during the second period of the Republic. Those industrialists who took the social part of Hitler's twenty-five Points too seriously, or who were afraid of the brusque methods of the Nazis, preferred to subsidise the German Nationals and their organizations, as the Stahlhelm. But the object of all these subsidies was the same—counter-revolution.

*The Stahlhelm and Other Semi-Military Organizations—  
"Playing at Soldiers"*

After the breaking up of the bourgeois bloc, the leadership of the German National Party passed from the moderate Count Westarp to the extremist Hugenberg, the nationalist propaganda chief, who during the war had been a director of Krupp's. After the war he not only reorganized the German National Party, but was also treasurer of the funds provided by industry to fight the Republic. As the proprietor of numerous newspapers and press agencies, he exerted a considerable influence on public opinion. From 1928 he gave a new impulse to his Party, hustling it into noisy and bitter opposition. This brought the German Nationals closer to the National Socialists.

The Stahlhelm, an organization of ex-servicemen, derived its political inspiration from the German Nationals. Its public demonstrations were no less noisy than those of the Nazis, nor was its political program in any way behind that of the Nazis, as may be gathered from the following

<sup>1</sup> In an interesting book on the activities of the big German concerns and their foreign affiliations (*Germany's Master Plan—The Story of Industrial Offensive*, by Joseph Borkin and Charles A. Welsh, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1943, p. 58), the name of Dr Schmitz, Managing Director of I. G. Farbenindustrie, the powerful chemical trust, is also mentioned as one of those who subsidized the Hitler movement on a large scale.

extract from the Stahlhelm proclamation of September 1928 :

" We hate the present form of government with all our hearts because it bars the prospect of liberating our enslaved Fatherland, of cleansing the German people of the war guilt lie, and of winning the necessary living space in the East . . . "

This did not prevent the Reich President from being an honorary member of the Stahlhelm, nor the Reichswehr from patronising this organization, which it considered as a vast school for military training. As the Stahlhelm membership ran into nearly a million, the Reichswehr found it an effective means of evading the Versailles Treaty's ban on conscription.

The Stahlhelm was led by two former officers of the Imperial Army—Lieutenant Seldte and Lieutenant-Colonel Duesterberg.

In 1928-1929 and the succeeding years, there were in the Reich, despite the ban on conscription, several semi-military organizations whose members were receiving military training. The Communists had the *Rote Front-kaempfer Verband*; though this was dissolved by Prussia's Socialist Government on May 3, 1929, it was soon re-formed under the name of the Antifascist League (Antifa).

The Socialists also had their semi-military organization—the Reichsbanner. This was founded on February 24, 1924, by the Socialist, Hoersing, and had some hundreds of thousands of members. It was imbued with the same opportunism as the Socialist Party itself. That was why the Reichsbanner never attempted to resist the attacks of Hitler and his associates.

The Stahlhelm was founded in Magdeburg in 1918, and developed very rapidly. It had 23,000 members at the end of 1919, 60,000 in 1920, 175,000 in 1923, 425,000 in 1929, and nearly a million in 1932. It was composed of four sections :

1. The *Kernstahlhelm* to which only ex-servicemen with at least six months' front service were admitted ;
2. The *Ringstahlhelm* for men with less than six months' front service.
3. The *Jungstahlhelm* for recruits aged from 17 to 23 years.
4. The *Schaznhorstbund* for boys of from 13 to 17 years.

From the territorial point of view the Stahlhelm was divided into battalions (*Ortsgruppen*), regiments (*Kreisgruppen*), and brigades (*Landesgruppen*). Its members wore a field-grey uniform and a cap with a steel-helmet emblem, and were obliged to parade for frequent exercises—day and night route marching, drill, reconnaissance work, map reading, etc. Their flag was the old Imperial standard—white with a black cross, the Hohenzollern eagle in the centre and an iron cross in the left corner. This flag indicated the Stahlhelm's open hostility towards the Republic.

The Stahlhelm was in close collaboration with another ex-servicemen's organization, the Kyffhauserbund, which was commanded by Colonel Rheinhard, Field-Marshal von Mackensen being its President. The Kyffhauserbund had approximately 100,000 members, many of whom were also members of the Stahlhelm.

Finally, the National Socialist Party had its S.A. and S.S. These shock formations developed throughout the Reich from 1925, but their real rise dates only from 1931, when Captain Roehm, at a formal request from Hitler, returned from Bolivia, where he had gone as military adviser to the Bolivian Army after a quarrel with Hitler at the end of 1925. On January 5, 1931, he was appointed head of the S.A. and S.S., which he developed into an immense army, with 400,000 men in the S.A. and 100,000 in the S.S., which was commanded by Himmler.

It is not without interest to note that there was still another semi-military organization, the "*Jungdeutscher Orden*," founded in Cassel on January 10, 1920, by Lieutenant Arthur Marauhn, retired. As regards external form and organization, the Order was modelled on the Medieval Order of the Teutonic Knights. The basic unit was the "Brotherhood," which was headed by a "Grand Master." The "Brotherhoods" were divided into "Followings" and "Troops." A number of "Brotherhoods" constituted a "Ballei" (approx. "Bailiwick"), which was headed by a "Komtur" ("Commander"). The meetings of the "Komturs" were called "Chapters." Marauhn himself was "Supreme Master," with absolutely dictatorial powers. The "Fuehrer principle" was also strictly enforced in the lower grades.

The Constitution of the German Youth Order contains, among other things, the following :

Section 5. "... a free Great Reich of all the Germans with all the tribes and States united, is the supreme aim of the German Youth effort."

The German Youth Order was by its very nature anti-Semitic, even though it sometimes denied this, and its program contained nothing to that effect. But, for instance, the works it recommended to its members during the first years of its existence "by way of spiritual rearmament," included the writings of Theodor Fritsch, the well-known anti-Semitic leader and editor of the *Hammer*. Marauhn himself, in a proclamation issued in 1924, said : "Remember that our struggle is directed against the Marxist-Jewish-materialist philosophy."

In 1929-1930 Marauhn attempted to unite the leading members of the so-called National Centre on a common program (*Volksnationale Aktion*—approx. : ethno-national movement). His *Volksnationale Reichsvereinigung* was founded in 1930. In July of the same year the German Youth Order amalgamated with the German Democratic Party. However, after the—to them—disappointing result of the Reichstag elections of September 14, 1930, the combination was broken up.

This temporary fusion of the Democratic Party with the *Jungdeutscher Orden* is characteristic of the mentality of the German political parties. This Party, which was considered abroad as the counterpart of the British Liberal Party, did not hesitate to merge with a nationalist organization that derived its moral inspiration from the aggressive imperialistic traditions of the Teutonic Knights ! At the same time, when it is recalled that the Pan-German, Naumann, was one of the founders of the Democratic Party and that Dr Schacht was a member, this incident is not so surprising after all.

In 1924 the *Jungdeutscher Orden* had approximately 6,000 local groups and a total membership of more than 500,000. Its Press organs were the daily paper *Der Jungdeutsche* (from 1924), and the monthly *Der Meister*.

The Reichswehr, of course, was hostile to the Communist semi-military organizations, cold as regards the Reichsbanner, reserved and somewhat suspicious as regards

the S.S. and S.A., which manifested an ambition to seize control of the Reich's military affairs, but cordial and trusting as regards the Stahlhelm.

The S.S. and S.A. sometimes acted as if they were rivals of the Reichswehr, whereas the Stahlhelm was only a loyal collaborator. Hindenburg's patronage and the presence of numerous former officers in the ranks of the Stahlhelm could not fail to make it acceptable to the Reichswehr, which in fact assigned certain definite tasks to it.

In case of war, the Reichswehr could rely on the trained reserves represented by the ex-servicemen. But taking thirty-five years as the age-limit for front-line troops, the ex-servicemen were losing some of their military value each year, and would not make satisfactory front-line soldiers after 1935. Thus the gaps had to be filled by training the younger men. As the Reichswehr itself could not provide this training without an obvious violation of the Peace Treaty, it left the task to the various patriotic or sports organizations, and preferably to the Stahlhelm.<sup>1</sup> The latter, with Reichswehr collaboration, undertook the military training of young men of proved nationalist convictions. Now that we are aware of these facts, it will be amusing to re-read the following passages from the conversation between Briand and Stresemann at Thoiry :

Briand : " What disquiets me are the national organizations in Germany ; what is all this business with the Stahlhelm ? "

Stresemann : " Associations of front-line fighters . . . from the military point of view they mean nothing and are not indeed supported by the Reichswehr. . . . General von Seeckt has never concealed the fact that he would only deal with real soldiers, and would have nothing to do with playing at soldiers. . . . Nor must the Stahlhelm be conceived as a reactionary organization. . . . Men want colour, joy, and movement—hence the success of the Stahlhelm. . . "

Briand : " That is just how I conceived matters. A man naturally enjoys putting a steel-helmet on his head and behaving as though he were still a mighty warrior. I don't attach serious importance to all this ! "

So they were innocent men playing at soldiers for their own amusement ! Only—having learned the game, they raised Hitler to power and filled the ranks of the new army he formed in 1935.

<sup>1</sup> The Reichswehr completed its task by secretly training the short-term volunteers (*Zeitfreiwillige*).

## CHAPTER XI

### EVACUATION OF THE RHINELAND— REPARATIONS

#### *Evacuation of the Rhineland Zone— Reconstruction of the Reich Government*

THE year 1929 was marked by two important events: revision of the Reparations problem and the fixing of the date of the complete evacuation of the Rhineland. The interminable arid discussions on Reparations seemed to monopolise the attention of the contemporary world, which showed more interest in the conditions and modes of Reparations payments than in the withdrawal of the Allied troops from German territory. The Young Plan, which in 1929 replaced the Dawes Plan, was to be torpedoed by the Germans already in 1931, though it extended the annuity payments over sixty consecutive years in a skilful and businesslike manner, so that after only two years Germany ceased to pay Reparations altogether. Meanwhile, international opinion under-estimated the importance of the Allied decision to evacuate the Rhineland five years before the time fixed by the Treaty. The last Allied troops left the Rhineland in June 1930—and in September of the same year German nationalist sentiment threw off all restraint and the German electors, intoxicated with joy to see Germany free from Allied military control, sent one hundred and seven Nazi Deputies to the Reichstag.

According to the Peace Treaty, the third occupation zone was not to be evacuated until 1935. But it was evacuated in 1930, and in 1935 Germany was already expressing its gratitude to the Allies by the re-introduction of conscription and a formidable increase of the effectives of the Reichswehr. A year later, in violation of her international engagements, she hastened to remilitarise the Rhineland zone and to commence the building of the Siegfried Line.

In 1929 it would have been bad taste to predict this succession of events. The prevailing vogue was to trust German democracy and the German Foreign Minister.



In Reich home affairs, 1929 was marked by lively discussions between the People's Party and the Centre on the composition of the Reich and Prussian Governments. The People's Party keenly desired to enter the Prussian Government, but while the Socialists did not object, the Centre was creating difficulties. On the other hand, the Centre was discontented to have only a single Minister in the Reich Government (Dr Guérard, Minister of Communications). In February, 1929, the latter resigned by way of protest. The crisis was settled in April; the Centre prevailed and was given three portfolios in the Reich Government (Dr Wirth, Stegerwald and von Guérard.) As against this, the People's Party had to abandon their demands and were not admitted into the Prussian Government, which continued to be the preserve of the Centre and the Socialists.

### *The Young Plan*

The Committee of Experts appointed to study the Reparations problem started its work in Paris in February, 1929. The German experts were: Dr Schacht, Reichsbank Governor, and future economic magician of the Hitler régime, and Dr Albert Voegler, a Rhineland industrialist, one of those who subsidised the National Socialist movement. Owen D. Young, the American banker, was Chairman of the Committee. On April 17, the German experts presented a memorandum demanding, in a disguised form, the return of the German colonies and the right to re-annex the Western provinces of Poland; the argument was that to maintain her capacity to pay, Germany needed overseas sources of raw material and new agricultural territories in Europe. Here is the relevant passage of the memorandum:

"Germany is compelled to a greater extent than any other industrial country to import raw materials from abroad for the maintenance and development of her industrial production. In consequence of the war, Germany's internal raw material basis has been considerably restricted, and she has been deprived of the possibility of opening up her own overseas raw material territories. These losses manifest themselves in an unusually great burden on the balance of trade and payment. But if Germany is to carry out the obligations to pay that are laid down in this Plan without a steadily increasing indebtedness to foreign

countries, then Germany must be given an opportunity to create her own overseas raw material basis again, which she could develop and extend with her own means of production, her own currency and under her own responsibility.

"As regards the German food supply, it is of special importance that the importation of foodstuffs should be reduced, and partly replaced by home production. In this connection one cannot overlook the fact that important surplus agricultural territories in Eastern Germany have been lost through cession and that a large territory almost exclusively devoted to agricultural production is cut off from the rest of the Reich. Consequently, the economic prosperity of this territory is continuously decreasing, and the Reich Government must continually grant it subsidies. Suitable measures ought therefore to be agreed with a view to eliminating these adverse conditions, which substantially reduce Germany's capacity to pay."

However, the Allied experts were not taken with these suggestions which evoked no echo.

Dr Schacht always attached considerable importance to the problem of colonies. Already in January, 1926, on his return from a visit to the United States, he confessed to Lord d'Abernon that he had discussed with certain Americans the idea of a German-American company to buy or lease the Portuguese colonies, *e.g.* Angola.<sup>1</sup>

In May Dr Voegler resigned and was replaced by Dr Kastl, another German industrialist. Finally, in June the experts agreed to accept a plan suggested by their Chairman, Owen D. Young; on June 7, the Young Plan was officially signed by all the experts, including Schacht and Kastl.

The Young Plan spread Reparations payments over a period of sixty years. The annuities were to start with a sum of 1,700 million marks, increasing to 2,400 millions by 1965, and progressively diminishing during the succeeding years. The financial operations involved were to be carried out by an international bank, which was later in fact established by the issue banks of the interested countries under the name of the Bank of International Settlements. The Young Plan contained a clause permitting Germany to ask for its revision in case of unforeseen crisis.

All the forms of international control over the Reich's financial and economic life imposed by the Dawes Plan as a guarantee of implementation (*e.g.*, control of German Railways and the operations of the Reichsbank) were

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. III, p. 220

abolished, so that the Allies waived all guarantees and relied entirely on Germany's good faith for the execution of the new Plan. This good faith lasted exactly two years.

On June 24, 1929, in the course of a bitter debate in the Reichstag, Stresemann himself blurted out the following significant words concerning the Reich's good faith :

"Do you think (leaning towards the German Nationals) that any member of the Reich Government regards the Young Plan as something ideal ? Do you think that anyone in the whole world expects a guarantee from us in relation to it ? It was even said among the experts that it was only possible to look ahead for the next decade (Interruption from the Right : ' Yet you signed for fifty-one years ' )."

Despite the opposition of the German Nationals, who used the Young Plan as a pretext for noisy nationalist agitation, the German Government, realizing the advantage of freedom from foreign control, on July 21 published the following Resolution :

"The Reich Government is prepared to accept the plan signed by the experts in Paris on June 7th last for the settlement of the Reparations problem as a basis for the inter-governmental Conference ; it is essential that in this connection the questions still outstanding from the World War shall be liquidated as a whole."

The final phrase referred to another German claim : the evacuation of the Rhineland.

*The Hague Conference—Allies Decide to Evacuate Rhineland on June 30, 1930—The Young Plan Adopted*

At the beginning of August an international conference met at The Hague to discuss both the Young Plan and the question of Rhineland evacuation. Germany was represented by Stresemann. His German biographers have correctly defined the aims which he pursued, and completely achieved, at The Hague :

"First get German soil free from occupation—the stranglehold off our necks—and then the fight for the political freedom must follow freedom in external relations. First get rid of the last foreign soldier, abolish the Commissions in the Reichsbahn, the Reichsbank and all the rest of them, then carry on the fight for the national aims in foreign politics, which were clearly kept in view."<sup>1</sup>

The Hague Conference lasted several weeks, owing to disputes between the Allies as to the division of the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 485.

Reparations payments and the difficulty of agreeing a precise date for the completion of Rhineland evacuation. Stresemann met with a certain amount of opposition from the French military experts, and he permitted himself some heavily sarcastic remarks which he would never have dared to utter at the beginning of his diplomatic career :

" Each of the Powers concerned," he said, " states that the evacuation of the Rhineland is not subject to discussion. The question is how it is to be carried out. . . . The removal of 50,000 men is a task that in the eyes of certain French military strategists has grown into one with which the entire French General Staff is apparently unable to cope by any foreseeable date, and anyone who is friendly disposed to France, and thinks that there may be another war, can only hope that the General Staff may be a trifle more active than it apparently is in peace time at present. Otherwise I take a gloomy view of their operations." <sup>1</sup>

He felt so sure of himself that he did not even shrink from making unpleasant pleasantries at the expense of his friend Briand, who was not quick enough in meeting German demands : " I know Briand so well ; he is terrified if he reads in the *Echo de Paris* that he is venturing too far." <sup>2</sup> Stresemann, when talking to the journalists, could afford to mock at his French opposites because he was sure that the evacuation of the Rhineland was a settled thing. At the same time, he was aware that if the Germans had been in the position of the French, they would have been more intractable, for he told the German Press :

" Indeed, I personally often imagine—though this, perhaps, is a fantasy—that the position of a German Foreign Minister in regard to a victorious Ludendorff, as touching the demand for the evacuation of occupied territory, might not be so simple as many imagine " <sup>3</sup>

One would be safe in taking Stresemann's word for it.

On August 30 Stresemann prevailed in the matter that was most important to him. On that date the Governments of Britain, France and Belgium informed him of their decision to complete the evacuation of the Rhineland by June 30, 1930. " Uncle Gustav " as the ex-Crown Prince's family called him, had thus kept the promise he had made in his letter of September 7, 1925—he had succeeded in freeing Germany of foreign troops. Germany had recovered her freedom of action.

On August 31 the Conference accepted the Young Plan.

*Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 586.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 542.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 594.

A few days later, in an interview with the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Stresemann explained its principal advantages for Germany:

"By the acceptance of the Young Plan Germany is freed from economic and financial control. . . . To sum up the Young Plan lightens our burdens, offers us the possibility of a moratorium, and is the lesser evil in a financial connection, while politically it is quite definitely the better solution."<sup>1</sup>

The ink of the German signature to the Young Plan was not yet dry and Stresemann was already alluding to the possibility of a moratorium. Two years later, Chancellor Brüning availed himself of a moratorium, and Reparations payments were suspended for ever.

However, the liberation of the Rhineland was of far greater importance than all the advantages of the Young Plan. Stresemann realised this and it was not without irony that, on September 9, before the League Assembly, he quoted the remark of the late Mr Ramsay MacDonald, then British Prime Minister, that "A political agreement offers just as great security as a regiment of soldiers."<sup>2</sup> We have had occasion since then to assess the comparative value of political agreements and regiments of soldiers.

### *Death of Stresemann*

Stresemann had accomplished his great task: he had restored defeated Germany to the status of a Great Power on an equal footing with the others, had freed the Ruhr and the Rhineland from foreign occupation, and had abolished foreign control of Germany's economic and financial life, as well as of her armaments. The deck was cleared—Germany could now go over to an aggressive policy. But fate would not have Stresemann himself conduct that policy. He died on October 3, 1929.<sup>3</sup> Mussolini said of him:

"His political enemies maintained, and still maintain, that his achievements were not worth the efforts involved, but it is clear that this view is inspired by violent Party dissension, and is not an impartial and measured judgment. The name of Stresemann will be indissolubly

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 604.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 612.

<sup>3</sup> He was succeeded on October 5 by Dr Curtius, who remained Foreign Minister until October 1931.

connected with the most intensive and fruitful period in German reconstruction ”

Anyone could agree with this tribute to Stresemann.

On the other hand, after reading Stresemann's memoirs, it would be difficult to join in the enthusiastic appreciation of him which was expressed by the Chairman of the Annual Conference of the British National Liberal Party in October, 1929 : “ The friendly nation of Germany has lost one of its most prominent citizens, a great international statesman and a friend of peace at all times and under all conditions.” At the Chairman's suggestion, the Conference sent the following telegram to the German Democratic Party (to which Stresemann had never belonged) :

“ The National Liberal Federation assembled in Conference sends to the German Democratic Party its respectful sympathy with the German nation in the great loss which the world has sustained in the death of Herr Stresemann whose life has been sacrificed to an unselfish sense of international duty ”

If the members of the Conference afterwards had occasion to read Stresemann's memoirs, they probably looked upon his international activities with a little less optimism and would have agreed with Baron von Rheinbaben that “ For him the only thing that mattered was the interest of the Reich.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Young Plan Accepted by the Reich Despite Nationalist Agitation*

If the German extremists covered Stresemann with abuse, it was not because he had restored Germany to the status of a Great Power and had prepared the ground for the re-birth of her military power, but because he had Liberal impulses as regards home policy, and perhaps also because his wife was of Jewish origin. At all events, his death was followed by clamorous nationalist agitation against the Young Plan. The German Nationals seized upon the Plan as a pretext to join with the National Socialists in a noisy agitation. They believed that with the liberation of German soil from foreign troops the period of the policy of negotiation had come to an end, and must

<sup>1</sup> *Stresemann*, by R. Baron von Rheinbaben, 1928 p. 284.

give way to a policy of force. Unfortunately, the German people agreed with them later on.

It was in the campaign against the Young Plan that Hugenberg first allied himself with Hitler. On the demand of their respective parties, a popular referendum took place on December 22, 1929. Hugenberg's enormous propaganda machine—newspapers, press agencies, as well as the UFA film company—made propaganda for Hitler as well as for the German Nationals. The Stahlhelm supported the two parties of the Right. The referendum produced 5,830,000 votes against the Young Plan—not sufficient to prevent the Reichstag from ratifying it. But it was sufficient to give Hitler considerable publicity up and down the country. At the end of 1929 the Nazi Party already had 176,000 members, and at the elections of September, 1930, it won 107 seats in the Reichstag. Hitler had come to the forefront of German political life.

Hindenburg authorised the Government to sign the Young Plan, but on condition that it should earmark 300 million marks gold of the Young Loan for long-term credits to the Prussian landowners. Chancellor Hermann Mueller agreed to this condition in an official letter to the President. That was how Hindenburg with the aid of the Socialist Chancellor showed his gratitude to the Junkers for the gift of Neudeck.

### *Financial Situation of Germany, Britain and France in Consequence of the War*

It might be asked whether the Germans were not justified in agitating against Reparations. Were not the successive Governments and Oppositions right in asserting that the Reparations payments were ruining Germany and reducing her to abject poverty? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In its propaganda the Weimar Republic first advanced the thesis of a Germany dying of famine because of the allied blockade, then the thesis of a Germany ruined by Reparations. The problem of Reparations could not be utilised for propaganda purposes before it took shape in the Peace Treaty. During the so-called armistice period German propaganda had to have recourse to another idea, namely that of a Germany reduced to famine by the blockade. What the Germans never mentioned was that all the continental countries that had been under German occupation during the war and had been ruthlessly exploited for the benefit of the Reich, were in a far worse situation than Germany itself.

Is it true that, after the conclusion of the armistice, Germany was subjected to a regime of famine until the Peace Treaty was signed? Is it true that the Allies

# EVACUATION OF THE RHINELAND—REPARATIONS 443

Of the three adversaries that clashed in 1914—Germany, Britain and France—and were now negotiating with each other, Germany was the richest. Her national wealth in 1913 was estimated at 16 billion pounds sterling and her national income at 2.15 billions, while the respective figures for Britain were 12.5 billions and 1.71 billions, and for France 12 billions and 1 billion. Thus Germany

used the blockade to exercise political pressure on a beaten Germany by inflicting untold miseries upon German women and children? The reply may be found in the statistics published in 1943 by the League of Nations in a pamphlet entitled: *Relief Deliveries and Relief Loans (1919-1923)* :

RELIEF DELIVERIES—ARMISTICE PERIOD (January to August 1919).					TOTAL VALUE
COUNTRY.					(in Dollars).
Finland	.	.	..		29,200,000
Estonia	.	.	..		19,300,000
Latvia	.	.	.		6,000,000
Lithuania					5,500,000
Poland	.	.			135,000,000
Czechoslovakia	.	.			105,500,000
Yugoslavia			.		43,600,000
Roumania	..	.	.		52,100,000
Armenia			.		20,200,000
Russia (non-Soviet)	..				15,000,000
Total (liberated countries)	.	...	..		431,400,000
Germany	..	...	.	..	282,400,000
Austria	..	...	.	...	98,800,000
Hungary	..	.	.		200,000
Bulgaria	..	.	...	.	4,900,000
Turkey	..		..	.	4,300,000
Total (enemy countries)	..	.			390,600,000
Belgium and Northern France	.	...	.		216,600,000
France	.	.	.		218,100,000
Italy	..	.	..	.	2,800,000
Denmark and Netherlands	..	.	...		6,300,000
Others	...	.	..	..	900,000
Total (Allies and Neutrals)	..	.	.		444,700,000
GRAND TOTAL	...	..	...		1,266,700,000

Nearly the whole of the relief sent to enemy countries went to Germany and Austria. In the light of the figures, therefore, it may be said that Germany and Austria were treated on an almost equal footing with the liberated countries and not much less generously than the allied countries themselves. And yet the clamour of German propaganda made the world forget all the facts and figures and made it believe that the Allies were guilty of unexampled cruelty. This clamour made the world also forget the real atrocities committed by Germany, before the armistice, in the occupied territories and especially in Northern France and Belgium. It is also worth recalling that the German Government was unwilling to allow German merchant ships to be used for carrying food to Germany. See *The Blockade*, by W. Arnold-Foster (Oxford Pamphlet), p. 34.



entered the war as the richest European Power. The cost of the war to the three countries was as follows :

Germany	...	...	..	£7,500,000,000
Britain	...	..	.	9,800,000,000
France	..	...	..	6,800,000,000

To this must be added, in the case of France, the complete destruction of the northern part of the country, which served as the theatre of war, while no part of Germany experienced the ravages of war.

At the conclusion of the war the respective national debts of the three countries were as follows :

Germany	...	.	...	£7,500,000,000
Britain	...	...	..	7,500,000,000
France	.	...	..	6,400,000,000

Germany, having defrayed the cost of the war by internal loans, had to deal only with her own citizens. She liquidated the loans by means of inflation, thus ridding herself of her national debt, though it is true that she thereby ruined her middle class. To this must be added the fact that in 1918 the Reichsbank held £115 millions (in gold and silver) as banknote cover. This money was spent not in Reparations, but was dissipated in the course of the flight from gold organized by the industrialists, who invested hundreds of millions of marks abroad during the inflation period.

As against this, Britain and France covered a considerable portion of their war expenditure from loans contracted in America. They could not have resorted to inflation—even if they had wanted to do so—as a means of liquidating their war debts. The respective principals alone amounted to 4,600,000,000 dollars for Britain and 4,025,000,000 for France. With interest the total for the two countries amounted to 17 billion dollars (£3,590 millions).

### *Reich's Reparations Payments*

The Allies hoped to restore the balance with Reparations payments, the total of which was on May 1, 1921, fixed at 132 billion marks, or £6,600 millions.

The history of Reparations falls into three periods :

1. From the conclusion of the Armistice to the coming into force of the Dawes Plan (November 11, 1918—August 31, 1924).
2. The period of the Dawes Plan (September 1, 1924—May 17, 1930).
3. The period of the Young Plan up to the Hoover Moratorium (May 17, 1930—July 31, 1931)

Without entering into the details of the Dawes and Young Plans, the important question is how much Germany paid in Reparations. Here are the figures :

First period (1918-1924)	..	10,416,900,000 marks gold.
Second period (1924-1930)	...	7,553,000,000   "   "
Third period	...   ...   ...	2,800,000,000   "   "
		<hr/> 20,765,900,000 marks gold.

Thus Germany paid approximately 15 per cent. of the sum fixed by the Allies in 1921, that is, £1,038,000,000. Only a quarter of the latter sum, that is 5,055 million marks (£253 millions) was paid in gold or foreign exchange. Three quarters were paid by deliveries in kind (*e.g.* coal), which only served to stimulate German production to the detriment of the creditor nations. But Germany under the Dawes and Young Plans received loans totalling two billion marks gold, which must be deducted from the German payments, for she never repaid either the Dawes Loan or the Young Loan. This brings the payments in gold or foreign exchange down to 3,000,000,000 marks gold or £153 millions. This is considerably less than the indemnity extorted by Germany in 1871 from France, who paid five billion francs gold in one sum. But of course, the war of 1870-1871 took place on the territory of the vanquished country, while that of 1914-1918 took place on the territory of two of the victors, France and Belgium.

To gain a more precise idea as regards Reparations, it should also be recalled that while Germany paid a total of £20 billion marks under this head, only three billions being in gold or foreign exchange, the German industrialists, without being obliged to do so, and impelled only by their own rapacity, transferred abroad approximately 10 billion marks gold during the inflation period. This is the figure given by the German paper *Der Wirtschaftsdienst*. But German opinion never accused them of having thereby ruined their country.

*Was Germany Ruined by Reparations?*

The total paid by Germany in Reparations was not very high, and it is therefore not surprising that her economic indices before the world economic crisis showed no tendency towards ruin or impoverishment. During the years of world prosperity her national income had in fact progressively increased:

1925	...	...	...	59,900	million	marks	gold.
1926	...	...	...	62,600	"	"	"
1927	...	...	...	70,000	"	"	"
1928	...	..	...	75,400	"	"	"
1929	...	...	...	75,900	"	"	"

In 1928 the national incomes per head of the population were as follows: Great Britain, 435 dollars; Germany, 231 dollars; France, 218 dollars.

The industrial production indices during the period in question were as follows:

			Great Britain	United States	Germany.
1925	...	...	100	100	100
1927	...	...	111	102	120
1928	...	...	105	107	120
1929	..	...	113	114	122

Germany's share in world exports as compared with that of the other countries was as follows, in percentages:

		Germany	Great Britain.	United States.	France.
1925	...	7.3	12.3	15.9	7.3
1926	...	8.4	10.8	16.0	6.6
1927	...	8.3	11.2	15.4	7.0
1928	...	9.1	10.9	15.6	6.4
1929	...	9.7	10.8	15.6	6.0
1930	..	11.8	10.5	14.3	6.3
1931	...	12.1	9.4	12.6	6.3
1932	...	11.7	10.1	12.4	6.0

The Reichsbank's gold reserve, which had been dissipated through inflation, rapidly increased during the period of prosperity:

				million marks:
1924	...	...	..	818
1925	...	...	.	1,273
1926	...	...	..	1,897
1927	...	..	...	1,930
1928	...	...	...	2,795
1929	...	..	.	2,349
1930	...	...	...	2,281

Private savings, which had also melted away during the inflation, had again accumulated in the banks :

millions.					
1924	595	1926	3,091	1928	7,205
1925	1,629	1927	4,665	1929	9,313
				1930	10,751
				1931	10,722

During the period from 1924 to 1930, approximately 45 billion marks was invested in German industry.

All this clearly indicates a country in full economic development. Germany, like the other great industrial countries, suffered from unemployment, but this phenomenon was due to causes unconnected with Reparations, as it was present in the victor countries as well. For instance, in 1926, 1927 and 1928, the number of unemployed was substantially the same in Britain as in Germany, fluctuating around a million.

Between 1914 and 1932, Germany built 2,652,165 new houses. Social insurance expenditure (apart from unemployment assistance) rose from 859 millions in 1913 to 4,075 millions in 1929. During the period when she paid Reparations, Germany was able to develop her hospitals (200,000 more beds than in 1913), built sports stadiums, workers' houses and swimming pools. Public health had enormously improved. For example, tuberculosis mortality had fallen from 20 per ten thousand inhabitants in 1918 to 7.3 in 1928.

Germany was also in a position to spend billions of marks on armaments and on subsidies to the industrialists and landowners.

Such was the ruin of Germany as brought about by Reparations. Yet the picture of misery painted by the persistent and cunning propaganda of the Reich aroused such a wave of sympathy in international public opinion that everyone admitted the necessity of abolishing Reparations.<sup>1</sup> When in 1931, President Hindenburg made an appeal to President Hoover, the latter caused a year's moratorium to be granted for Reparations and war debts. Then at the Lausanne Conference in 1932, the Allies agreed to abolish Reparations completely.

<sup>1</sup> It is not within the scope of this book to examine the question whether Reparations as conceived by the Treaty of Versailles were advantageous or harmful to the economic life of the Allied Powers. The sole question dealt with here is that of the policy and propaganda of the Weimar Republic in relation to the obligations successively contracted in this respect by the Reich.

But the Allied debts to the United States were not cancelled. Britain and France were left with this burden of the war, while Germany had adroitly evaded her obligations.

*Foreign Loans and the Spending Craze—  
Foreign Creditors Frustrated*

However, in order to have a correct picture of Germany's financial relations with the rest of the world, we must also bear in mind another aspect of the question—the foreign loans granted to Germany from 1924 until the Hoover Moratorium. During this period of seven years Germany received 23,800 million marks gold (£1,903 millions) in gold or foreign exchange. Dr Schacht, the most competent man on this subject, gave an even higher estimate:

"During the period 1924-1930, the immense sum of more than £2,000,000,000 (reckoning the British £ at 12½ Reichsmarks) was advanced to Germany by foreign creditors."<sup>1</sup> Let us recall that the total Germany paid in Reparations was 20 billion marks, of which only three billions was in gold or foreign exchange—so that it was Germany that drained gold and exchange away from the Allies, not the other way round. It was the victors, and particularly the United States, that furnished money to the vanquished, who nevertheless cynically asserted that he was being bled white by Reparations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Speaks*, by twenty-one leading Members of Party and State. With a Preface by Joachim von Ribbentrop, London, 1938, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Winston Churchill, speaking in the House of Commons on July 11, 1932, said: "There has been no Carthaginian peace. Neither has there been any bleeding of Germany white by the conquerors. The exact opposite has taken place. The loans which Britain and the United States particularly and also other countries, have poured into the lap of Germany since the firing stopped, far exceed the sum of Reparations which she has paid, indeed, they have been nearly double. If the plight of Germany is hard—and the plight of every country is hard at the present time—it is not because there has been any drain of her life blood or of valuable commodities from Germany to the victors. On the contrary, the tide has flowed the other way. It is Germany that has received an infusion of blood from the nations with whom she went to war and by whom she was decisively defeated. Even these loans, which are almost double the payments Germany has made in Reparations, are now in jeopardy. They are subject to a moratorium. . . . Absolved from all the burdens of Reparations, with a moratorium upon all her commercial debts, with her factories equipped to the very latest point of science by British and American money, freed from internal debt, mortgages, fixed charges, debentures and so forth, by the original flight from the mark, Germany only waits trade revival to gain an immense mercantile ascendancy throughout the world. I think that we are entitled to felicitate Germany on what has taken place, and I am sorry to say, as far as my information has reached us, that her only reaction is to ask for more."

The Reich, the German States, the municipalities and the industrial concerns all participated in the benefit of the foreign loans. From 1924—the time of the Dawes Loan—until the economic crisis, Germany was able to pick and choose among the foreigners who were eager to lend her either long term or short term money. Contrary to the allegations of German propaganda, the afflux of foreign gold and exchange created an atmosphere of very easy money. The spirit of economy had been volatilized. There was a frenzied and continuous rush to invest in all sorts of forms. Everyone borrowed without bothering to think how the debts would be repaid. It had become a craze in Germany. The Reich Government encouraged the process instead of preventing it. It allowed the debts to mount up; and the money was used in the first place to develop and modernise industry as the basis of military power, and to hasten rearmament. A portion was used to satisfy the masses by the building of workers' dwellings and the development of social insurance and the health services. There would be nothing objectionable in this, if only the money used for these purposes had been German money. It was a most ironical situation that while the workers of the creditor countries were starving and living in slums, their German comrades were being appeased by their *bourgeoisie* with money furnished by those same countries.

The following extract from one of Stresemann's letters gives an idea of the nature of the craze prevailing in Germany:

"When I hear that Hamburg has built a new stadium at a cost of two million pounds, I have to ask whether there is not some danger in such prodigality on the part of local authorities." (October 6, 1927.)<sup>1</sup>

On November 24, after he and his propagandists had consistently claimed that Germany had been ruined by the Versailles Treaty and Reparations, Stresemann wrote a worried letter to his friend Dr Jarres, Mayor of Duisburg:

"I will not conceal the fact that the policy of the States and municipalities, and mainly the latter, causes me great anxiety from the foreign-political point of view. . . . The fact that the Prussian State has provided 14 million marks for the reconstruction of the Berlin Opera House, and will, in all, perhaps provide more than 20 million marks, suggests to the whole world that we are obviously rolling in money. No victor State

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit.* Vol. III., p. 279.

has spent such sums. The fact that Herr Adenauer (Mayor of Cologne) is building a wonderful Fair building, in which he has installed the largest organ in the world, has the same effect. If it is true that a new Rhine Museum is to be built at Cologne, the present one having proved inadequate, after its hundred years of existence, that will produce the same result. The Press Exhibition at Cologne is described as the most luxurious of the kind that has ever been held; Frankfurt am Main incurred a deficit of 2½ million marks over the Music Exhibition. Dresden is building a Museum of Hygiene with assistance from the Central Government. Berlin wants a ten-year building exhibition, of which the halls are to be permanent, no doubt to provide a sixth assembly-ground in addition to the five we have already.

"Will you please have the kindness to tell me what answer I am to make to the representatives of foreign Powers when they tell me that all these things give the impression that Germany did not lose but won the war? I am at my wits' end in the face of these reproaches. . . ."¹

At the same time, however, Stresemann was the first to welcome the afflux of foreign money:

"We need the milliards that have flowed into our trade and industry in the form of foreign loans, and the fact that by these credits the destiny of other nations is bound up with the economic development of Germany, is to be welcomed (October 31, 1927)²"

The Germans, usually so well versed in economic matters, must have realized that the foreign indebtedness of the Reich, the States, municipalities and private concerns was growing with such staggering rapidity that an ultimate crash was inevitable. Did they pile up these debts with the preconceived idea of later declaring themselves insolvent, or were they simply borrowing without any thought for the future? In either case, they acted dishonestly in abusing the *naïveté* of the foreign creditors, who were investing their money with an unshakable faith in Germany's solvency.

However, Stresemann was right when he wrote that the accumulation of debts created a community of interests between the creditors and Germany—at any rate so long as the former expected to recover their money. Dr Schacht, the Governor of the Reichsbank, on December 3, 1930, on his return from a visit to the United States, made a statement that throws a singular light on the German tactics:

"I emphasised the fact (in the United States) that Germany has the most absolute and earnest wish to fulfil all her obligations to private persons. The only thing which will ruin German credit in the long run

¹ *Op cit.*, Vol. III., p. 282.

*Ibid.*, p. 283.

is if we continue the political payments (Reparations). Moreover, the United States are, of course, not directly interested in the Reparations questions. For my part, I have repeatedly pointed out that Inter-Allied debts have no legal connection with Reparations. I have further pointed out that England and France are very well able to pay these debts to America out of their substance, even if they do not receive a farthing from Germany.

"It is, however, doubtful whether any agreement can be made with England and France by peaceful means for the further payment of these Inter-Allied debts if Reparations are dropped. . ."

It is difficult to imagine a more cynical statement. What Schacht told the Americans, more or less, was this: If you want your money back from Germany, exert pressure on the British and French to abolish Reparations; but do not worry about war debts—you need only threaten the British and French and they will go on paying.

Strangely enough, however, Dr Schacht prevailed. Reparations were formally abolished two years later, but the Inter-Allied debts remained. And when the Allies, in the absence of Reparations payments, were obliged to suspend their own debt payments, the United States passed the famous Johnson Act to impede financial collaboration between the three Democracies. Thus Germany had succeeded not only in having Reparations abolished, but also in sowing discord among the Western Democracies.

However, the private creditors heaved a sigh of relief, firmly hoping that Dr Schacht's promise would be kept and that after the abolition of Reparations the private debts would be regularly repaid.

The German periodical *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, on August 27, 1932, published an estimate of German indebtedness abroad on the basis of the statistics of the *Anmeldestelle fuer Auslandsschulden*. This official estimate as at February 29, 1932, gives the following figures:

Short-term debts	...	...	10 billion marks gold.
Long-term debts	...	...	10 billion marks gold.
Total			20 billion marks gold.

Foreign investments in Germany were estimated at seven billions, 500 millions being in debentures, 4,500 millions in industrial and other holdings, and two billions in real estate. Thus in 1932 the total foreign capital placed in Germany amounted to 27 billion marks gold.



The creditors were distributed as follows :

	Short-term loans	Long-term loans
United States ...	3,227	5,165
Holland ... ..	1,661	1,914
Switzerland .. ..	1,615	1,146
Great Britain . .	1,286	1,146
France ... ..	474	482
Sweden ... ..	136	167
Belgium ... ..	119	80
Czechoslovakia .	157	18
Italy .. ..	73	74
Denmark . . . .	51	9
Norway ... ..	14	5
Other countries ..	1,340	264

The German debtors fell into the following categories :

The German Reich, the German States, the provinces, the municipalities, the Churches, the industries<sup>1</sup> and the banks. It is interesting to note that even the Churches did not disdain foreign money ; the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches manifested the same eagerness in this matter, contracting debts running into hundreds of millions.

The National Socialist Reichsbank Governor Schacht did not consider it necessary to keep the promise made to the private creditors by the Democratic Reichsbank Governor Schacht. In June 1933 (that is, two years after the suspension of Reparations payments, and one year after their formal abolition), he advised the new Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, to declare a moratorium on all foreign debts except the Dawes and Young Loans ; but payments on these two were suspended in 1934. From the time of the moratorium the foreign creditors found themselves in a situation where they could consider their investments in Germany as lost for ever.

Germany was using the gold and exchange required for the service of the private loans in purchasing raw materials, of which she was laying in stocks with a view to war. The tragi-comedy had now reached its climax—with money provided by the citizens of the United States,

<sup>1</sup> " Some of the chief borrowers from the U.S.A. were Vereinigte Stahlwerke (273 million marks), Thyssen (71 million marks), Krupp (147 million marks), and the two big electrical firms, Siemens and A.E.G (42 million each)." (Quoted from *Future Germany*, by Colonel T. H. Minshall, 1943, p. 34 ) All those firms were of vital importance to German war production, which was thus developed partly with foreign credits

Britain and other democratic countries, the Reich was buying raw materials in those same countries or in their colonies for the purpose of making war against those countries. International opinion was viewing this process with a stoicism that is difficult to comprehend to day.

*Hilferding again Scapegoat of Socialist Opportunism—  
Bruening becomes Chairman of Parliamentary Centre  
Party—Two Examples of Nationalist Frenzy*

To complete the picture of 1929, we must recall two facts that are not very creditable to the German Socialists. Towards the end of the year Hermann Mueller's Government found itself in desperate straits and turned to the Reichsbank for money. This was a good opportunity for bourgeois circles to get rid of the Socialists, who were no longer needed in the Government. Once the evacuation of the Rhineland was a settled question, the facade of democracy provided by them became superfluous. The Government's financial difficulties were therefore seized upon to undermine it. Schacht, the Reichsbank Governor, replied to its request with an ultimatum, refusing to lend money to the State unless the Government complied with certain demands formulated by the Reichsbank. On the other hand, the People's Party, representing heavy industry, demanded the resignation of Dr Hilferding, the Minister of Finance. The Socialists responded to these attacks with an attitude of humility—they accepted Schacht's demands and also, as in 1923, agreed to sacrifice Hilferding, provided they could stay in the Government. Dr Hilferding's place was taken by Dr Moldenhauer, a man trusted by the People's Party. At this price Hermann Mueller and his colleagues remained in office. But their humiliation saved them only for a few months—in March 1930, they were definitely thrown overboard to make room for the bourgeois Government of Dr Bruening.

Towards the end of 1929 the Socialists of the Berlin City Council were involved in a resounding scandal when it came out that the firm of Sklarek had made exorbitant profits on municipal orders. A number of high municipal dignitaries had accepted enormous bribes to connive in the sinister transactions of Messrs Sklarek. This scandal was

certainly not calculated to restore the prestige of the Socialists, which was already compromised by their opportunist policy.

In December 1929 the Centre's constant evolution towards the Right found expression in its choice of a new Chairman for the Reichstag group, H. Bruening, a friend and colleague of Mgr. Kaas, being elected.

While the prestige of the Socialist Party and of the Left in general was irretrievably on the wane, that of the extreme Right became correspondingly enhanced. The nationalist fever was constantly mounting, but no party had the courage to fight this contagion, which was bound to kill the Weimar Republic. We cite two examples of this effervescence of nationalist sentiment out of the many thousands.

In 1927 there appeared the sixth edition of *Der deutsche Aufsatz in den hoeheren Lehranstalten*—Ein Hand-und Hilfsbuch fuer Lehrer—(German Compositions in Higher Schools, Manual for Schoolmasters. Edited by K. Dorenwall and Educational Counsellor Prof. Dr A. Voegeler. Publisher, Karl Mayer, Hanover). This manual contains the following model for an essay on the advantages of war :

I. For the nations :

1. War is an antidote to the weeds of peace, when rationalism prevails over idealism and puts everything to sleep.
2. Patriotism is aroused, the sacred enthusiasm for the Fatherland flares up.
3. The victorious people wins the position of power, the prestige and influence to which it is entitled, the vanquished people loses nothing of its honour if it has defended itself heroically.
4. The peoples learn to know and appreciate each other better. There is an exchange of ideas, opinions and points of view.
5. Trade seeks new paths, which are often favourable.
6. Art, and, in particular, poetry and painting, are provided with new subjects.

" II. For the citizens :

1. War affords opportunities to develop talent, without war there would be fewer great men in the world.
2. Many virtues have an opportunity to assert themselves.
3. Religious sentiment is aroused both in the victor and vanquished.
4. Many active men find an opportunity to make big fortune.
5. To die for the Fatherland is sweet. The dead of the enemy live in the memory of the victor."

If anyone is surprised to learn that such a manual was in circulation in the German schools under the Republic, let him read the following reflection of Lord d'Abernon, who was certainly no Germanophobe :

"No one that I have met here would think a successful war morally reprehensible ; nor would anyone advocate a war likely to prove unsuccessful on the ground that it was morally defensible." <sup>1</sup>

In 1929 a German author, Max-René Hesse, published a novel that created a considerable stir and was a best-seller. It was entitled *Partenau*, and told the story of a Reichswehr Lieutenant—Partenau—and his friend Stefan, a subaltern. There are two dominant emotions, strangely mingled—nationalism and perverted love. We should not mention this rather disgusting work but for the fact that the author's ravings were partially realized by the Nazis. In the light of what was happening during the war, it is worth while quoting the following characteristic passage from *Partenau* :

"He rose, took a fat portfolio from a steel cabinet which Stefan had not noticed before. The young man followed his movements with an excited gaze. Then he leaned on the shoulders of Partenau, who had sat down again. For two hours he listened, with slightly parted lips, and completely dazed, to the exposition of a minutely detailed plan relating to a lightning attack by twenty divisions launched from the line leading from Eger to the Austrian frontier against Prague and the Elbueber passes, with a view to reaching the Silesian frontier the following morning or the morning after.

"The task to be accomplished was to render the worm called Czechoslovakia that was in Germany's entrails harmless with a single stroke. Its head, Bohemia, was to be severed. During the decisive battle west of the Oder against the Polish-Czechoslovak army, no one will expect this thrust.

"And there we are again in a crushed Poland. We want peace in the East, a durable peace, without which Europe will again be in flames ! We shall certainly be left in peace.

"They were both silent for a while. Finally, Stefan, speaking in a low voice, dared to put the question : ' And now ? '

"Partenau gazed at him dreamily .

"First of all, the entire captured Polish-Czechoslovak army, except the German soldiers, get transported en masse to Russia and Siberia. There were secret arrangements at the beginning of the war. Our best technical organisers have established, in eight weeks, an organization prepared by us in minute detail and enjoying dictatorial powers in both countries, with Russian consent, of course. Each prisoner will be

<sup>1</sup> *An Ambassador of Peace*, by Viscount d'Abernon, Vol. I., p. 279.

obliged to take his family or relations with him. Each Russian town, as far as Mongolia, will receive a Czech or Polish peasant family. The workers' families will be distributed among the industrial towns, if necessary among German towns as well. After a fortnight the families will be on their way, will-nilly."

" But what for ? " asked Stefan with trembling lips.

" They will never return," replied Partenau calmly. " But no one knows, no one, except perhaps ten leaders. We shall keep the depopulated country because nothing is more necessary to us in order to remain a great people. The new frontier will run from the extreme south-west of Eastern Prussia to the old Galician frontier along the Dniester. That alone can ensure for Europe a durable peace, and to ourselves complete agreement with France."

" Stefan rose, gripped the lamp with both hands :

" I could die for that ! "

" Partenau went up to him impetuously, embraced him and kissed him on the mouth ! "

## CHAPTER XII

### END OF PARLIAMENTARY REGIME

#### *The Economic Crisis*

THE decade which was to end with the unleashing of the second world war by the Reich began with the worst economic depression known until then. This was necessarily a check to the era of prosperity that was inaugurated in 1924 with the stabilisation of the mark and during which Germany was enabled to lead a comparatively easy life at the expense of her foreign creditors. Germany, having absorbed enormous external loans, particularly from America, was bound to feel the effects of the crisis, which has been frequently referred to as the American crisis, Wall Street having during the course of it lived through the blackest days of its history. The American bankers were in need of liquid resources, and tried to call in the money they had lent. And they had been until then generous to Germany.

The German Treasury, which between 1924 and 1926 had had some large surpluses, but which had already experienced certain difficulties between 1926 and 1928 owing to camouflaged rearmament and an extensive social policy,<sup>1</sup> was unable to fill the gaps by the means of an exploration of the home market.

In 1929 Germany contracted some minor loans: an American loan of 210,000,000 marks, followed by one of 500 millions from Sweden (Ivar Kreuger Trust), but these were only sufficient to fill the holes for a very short time. The situation became difficult, like, after all, in all countries in the world.

#### *Second Hague Conference and Schacht's Resignation*

The second Hague Conference on Reparations was preceded by a sensational outburst on the part of Reichsbank Governor Schacht. At the beginning of December

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Stampfer in his book *14 Jahre deutscher Republik*, describes all this more modestly as "the internal requirements of the Reich. . . ." 1p. 510 ss.

1929 he had sent a memorandum to his Government withdrawing the signature that he had put to the Young Plan several months earlier. Dr Schacht also made a vehement attack on the Reich Government's financial policy, and refused to co-operate in negotiations for any future foreign loans. "... The German people," he said, "expect the foreign Governments to abandon definitely their attempts to extort from German economy concessions beyond the limits of the Young Plan."

Schacht's flamboyant gesture was linked with an attempt by the Hugenberg-Hitler team in the autumn of 1929 to introduce by plebiscite a "Law concerning the enslavement of Germany," which demanded the withdrawal of the Young Plan, the unilateral repudiation of Germany's war guilt and the immediate evacuation of the occupied areas. Although in his memorandum Schacht declared himself against Hugenberg's and Hitler's action, he was in fact aiming at the same result. "I am in favour of the Plan, but as I do not want it to be violated, I am repudiating it!" was his formula. It is thus quite certain that Schacht's intervention helped to promote the plebiscite, which it preceded by a fortnight. However, the plebiscite was a failure, a bare thirty per cent. of the necessary votes being cast in favour of the proposed law.

The practical effect of Dr Schacht's *pronunciamento* was to force Hilferding to tender his resignation and the Government to comply with his demands, i.e., to increase excise duties (on tobacco, etc.), and to accept an emergency expenditure program in accordance with the interests of Big Business.

This theatrical gesture increased Dr Schacht's popularity with the nationalist Right Wing; he reaped the reward three years later, when he became financial and economic dictator of the Third Reich.

At the Reparations Conference, which opened on January 3, 1930, the German delegation officially no longer included Schacht, but he nevertheless accompanied it to the Hague. There he made a new sensational statement, to the effect that the Reichsbank could not see its way to joining the newly created Bank of International Settlements in Basle. However, the Delegation, considering it impossible to maintain this attitude, agreed that the Reichsbank

should participate in the Bank of International Settlements. Dr Schacht, by way of protest, on March 8, 1930, resigned his governorship of the Reichsbank, and was replaced by Dr Luther.

While Dr Schacht, in association with Hitler and Hugenberg, was agitating against the Young Plan, the Socialists chose a different line. Instead of vituperating against the Plan, they accepted it, but hastened to use it as a pretext to demand fresh concessions from the Allies. On February 14, the Socialist group in the Reichstag tabled the following resolution :

“ It is the unanimous wish of the entire German people that as soon as possible after the acceptance of the Young Plan, the Saar territory, which has been detached from the Reich, should be reunited with the German Reich. In the negotiations on this question it must be the task of the Reich Government to see that the Saar mines are restored to German sovereignty and the former Government mines are returned to their former owners . . . ”

### *Ratification of the Young Plan*

In spite of the fanatical obstruction of the Hugenberg German Nationals and the National Socialists, the Young Plan passed through the different stages in the Reichstag. President von Hindenburg decided to sign the bills of ratification, and this actually took place on March 13, 1930. At the same time, the Field Marshal issued a manifesto appealing for a political truce in view of the greater interest of the Reich, and explaining the main reason why he approved the Plan :

“ I am fully aware of the fact that the mere acceptance of the Young Plan does not free us all from anxiety for the future ; nevertheless, I confidently believe that the course upon which we have now embarked and which brings to German Occupied Territory its longed-for freedom, and to us all hope for further progress, will prove the right one.”

The Marshal reasoned exactly like Stresemann, namely, that it was more important to get rid of the Allied troops occupying the Rhineland zone than to make futile nationalist demonstrations against the Young Plan, which could in any case be torpedoed later, when Germany was once more mistress of her national territory. This reasoning failed to satisfy the extremist circles who, ultimately, saw



in the opposition to the Young Plan a means of gaining popularity and more votes. The German Nationals and the National Socialists were vociferating against Reparations—and absurd as their propaganda appeared to be, it was in fact shrewd. Their tactics were justified by the results of the Reichstag elections six months later. The National Socialists went so far in their agitation as to insult even Hindenburg, the national hero of the war. The first to use offensive language with reference to the President was his former collaborator, General Ludendorff, who said: "Field Marshal von Hindenburg has forfeited the right to wear the field grey uniform of the army and to be buried in it. Herr Paul von Hindenburg has destroyed the very thing he fought for as Field Marshal." An article in the Pan German *Deutsche Zeitung* on March 13, entitled "Farewell" (to Hindenburg), appeared with a *black border*. The National Socialists refused to be outdone, and roundly abused Hindenburg. As a result, an action against Goebbels for insulting the Reich President was heard on May 31, before the Grand Jury in Charlottenburg. On von Hindenburg's complaint, the State Attorney made an *ex officio* charge, based on the following facts: At the end of December 1929, there appeared in the newspaper *Der Angriff*, edited by Goebbels, an article entitled, in heavy type, "Is Hindenburg Still Alive?" The article commented on the President's complete apathy in the Young question, stating that he had done what his Jewish-Marxist advisers had suggested to him. Beneath the article was a picture representing Hindenburg as a Teutonic god decorated with Jewish emblems, in the act of forcing the German people under a yoke. The punishment demanded was nine months' imprisonment, but the accused was only fined 800 marks. However, the judgment was quashed on appeal, with costs against the Treasury. The Appeal Court's judgment stated that the defendant had acted in defence of legitimate interests. Firstly, he had a personal interest whether the Young Plan was accepted or not and, secondly, being a Reichstag Deputy, he had also acted as a representative of the people. These two judgments reflected the popularity of the nationalist agitation even among the judges, normally the most balanced people in any country.

*Hermann Mueller Replaced by Heinrich Bruening*

Once the Young Plan had been ratified and the liberation of the Rhineland zone thereby achieved, Socialist participation in the Government ceased to be necessary. The Reich no longer needed this alibi before foreign opinion. The ratification of the Young Plan was approved by Hindenburg on March 13, and a fortnight later Hermann Mueller was obliged to resign. The pretext was found in the disagreement between the Government parties on social policy. The coalition parties split (on March 27) into two groups on the question of increasing the Reich's contribution to unemployment insurance to four per cent., which was equivalent to an addition of 200 million marks to the Reich's social budget. This was vehemently opposed by Hugenberg, whose views were shared by Moldenhauer, the Reich Minister of Finance. On behalf of the Federation of German Employers' Organization, Herr von Borsig and Director Brauweiler had written to the Government a letter stating that : " The employers base themselves on the fact that a further increase of the contributions to unemployment insurance is incompatible with the state of economy and also with the need for lightening the burden of economy as emphasised by the Reich Government in its program." At a first glance one might be inclined to share the view of the German employers. But while the economic crisis caused the ruling class to be very cautious in the matter of unemployment assistance, it did not prevent them from increasing expenditure on armaments. On April 14, Baron von Gayl, a German National Deputy from East Prussia, had a motion passed by the Reichsrat for the construction of the second " B " cruiser.

At all events, Hermann Mueller was forced to resign, his Government coalition having ceased to exist. One could say with Schiller : " The Moor has done his duty, the Moor may go ! "

President von Hindenburg, on March 28, appointed Dr Heinrich Bruening, a forty-six years old lawyer and member of the Right Wing of the Catholic Centre, as Chancellor. Bruening had distinguished himself as an officer during the war. In 1918 he was commanded to lead a special detachment of the so called " Winterfeld-

Group," which was formed by the General Staff to protect the Kaiser against the November Revolution. On November 8, 1918, he was ordered to clear a railway station at Herbesthal of revolutionary elements. Captain Bruening occupied the station and broke the resistance of the revolutionaries, though owing to a telegraphic misunderstanding his success was not exploited by the General Staff to the best advantage. From that time his prestige was high in leading military circles.

Bruening made no attempt to conceal this phase of his career when, later, the National Socialists attacked his policy as Chancellor of the Reich. During a Reichstag debate on February 25, 1932, he made the following characteristic reply to their allegation that he was one of the men of the November Revolution :

" . . . Ladies and Gentlemen. You are continually talking of 'this system,' which you sometimes describe as the Bruening system, and sometimes as the system of November 9th. Please do not try to connect me in any way with November 9th. Let me finish. Where was I on November 9th? (Continuous noisy shouts from the National Socialists.) Allow me to finish if you have the courage to listen to me. On November 9th . . . (Shouts from the National Socialists: 'Mr Reich Chancellor, we know quite well that you have nothing to do with November 9th!') But you have not the courage to say so to the country, and therefore I must say it here once more: Gentlemen, I was with the troops, at the head of the Winterfeld<sup>1</sup> Group formed to overthrow the Revolution." (Deputy Dr Frick: "But you are in league with the Party of November 9th").

Bruening: "That brings me to the words uttered by Deputy Rosenberg<sup>2</sup> when he defined the aims of the party to which I belong as the strengthening of France and the Eastern powers, and the weakening of Germany. That is a monstrous allegation. You can't get away with it. What upsets me is that this accusation has been made by a man who had not yet discovered which was his fatherland when I was already fighting in the war . . ."

Since 1919 in close touch with the Reichswehr, a Conservative and Monarchist at heart, Bruening entered the Reichstag on the Catholic Party list, and rapidly made a name as a financial expert. In 1929, after having facilitated the passage of the military estimates, Bruening became

<sup>1</sup> General D. von Winterfeld, later a German member of the Armistice Commission.

<sup>2</sup> A. Rosenberg, a German Balt, was still in 1914-1918 a Russian citizen.

von Schleicher's candidate for the Chancellorship, and he was also strongly supported by the Junker cast. Herr von Oldenburg Januschau called Bruening "the best Chancellor since Bismarck."<sup>1</sup> During the nationalistic uproar occasioned by the ratification of the Young Plan, Generals Groener and von Schleicher, and also Meissner, strongly insisted on the choice of Bruening as Chancellor. When Heinrich Bruening was called for an interview with Hindenburg on January 1, 1930, the latter, influenced by his camarilla, already had visions of him as the new Chancellor. However, Bruening himself at that time thought that Hermann Mueller should be kept in office until the evacuation of the Rhineland had been definitely decided upon.

Bruening started his career as Chancellor by forming a Government without the Socialists. The physiognomy of his Government was very different from that of the previous Government. It contained four members of the Centre: Dr Bruening (Chancellor), Dr Joseph Wirth (Ministry of the Interior), Dr Stegerwald (Labour), and von Guerard (Communications); two of the People's Party: Dr Curtius (Foreign Affairs), and Dr Moldenhauer (Finance); while the five other portfolios were divided among five other Reichstag Parties: Dr Treviranus, Popular Conservative (Occupied Regions), Dr Schaetzel, Catholic Bavarian People's Party (Postmaster General), Dietrich, Democrat (Economy), Dr Schiele, German National People's Party (Agriculture), and Dr Bredt, Economic Party (Justice). It should be noted that Schiele, Bredt and Treviranus had previously voted against the Young Plan, as well as against the "Bill for the Protection of the Republic." As to the Reichswehr Ministry, this remained in the hands of General Groener, who carried on as a symbol of the continuity of Reichswehr policy.

### *Bruening and Parliament*

The new Chancellor first appeared in the Reichstag on May 1, 1930, where he stated that the "Cabinet had been formed with a view to solving within the shortest time the

<sup>1</sup>Wheeler-Bennett in *Hindenburg—the Wooden Titan*, p. 347.

tasks that according to the general opinion are necessary for the Reich. It will be the last attempt to bring about a solution with the present Reichstag."

His colleague Treviranus on March 29 in his *Volkskonservative Stimme*, gave the following welcome to the new Chancellor :

"What is happening is more than one of those changes of government involved in the parliamentary system. We *Volkskonservativen* have been waiting for this decision; that has been said often enough. Indeed, we have done many a thing to hasten it for the benefit of the Vaterland. If this attempt fails, if the resistance to be expected with certainty proves to be insurmountable, then all legal possibilities for a reconstruction of German life will have been exhausted. Then nothing will be left but either chaos or dictatorship. That is the meaning of the hour."

Treviranus explained very clearly the intention of the Chancellor, who had decided to govern Germany either with the aid of a docile Reichstag or, if it manifested any trends towards independence, against the Reichstag. Setting aside the parliamentary regime instituted in Germany by the Weimar Constitution, Bruening relied on a single Article of that Constitution—the notorious Article 48. He proposed to avail himself of it in the name of the President, but without heeding the will of Parliament. Thus his legal solution consisted in a system of government with the aid of Emergency Decrees, by virtue of Article 48, which could be applied for in case "the German Reich's public security and order are seriously disturbed or threatened."<sup>1</sup> As Article 48 entitled the Reich President to issue decrees only if public order and security were seriously disturbed or threatened, and no such situation existed in 1930-1932, a systematic resort to this Article was a flagrant violation of the Weimar Constitution. For the rest, Bruening was not the first Chancellor to abuse Article 48. This had already been done in 1923 by the Government presided over by another Catholic leader, Dr Marx, who in virtue of Article 48 abolished the eight-hour working day. But Bruening was the first to abuse this Article systematically, governing solely by means of Emergency Decrees.

<sup>1</sup> The Article empowered the Government to suspend for a time, wholly or partly, the fundamental rights of the citizens, laid down in Art. 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, 153 of the Weimar Constitution.

*Events in Prussia*

In Prussia, Albert Grzesinski, Socialist Minister of the Interior, suddenly resigned on March 20, because the National Socialist papers had made a personal attack on him. He was not regretted by the Left. "Albert Grzesinski is retiring, a sick and embittered man, branded as the enemy of the workers," wrote the *Weltbuehne* (March 4, 1930) on his resignation. He could not be forgiven by the Left for the incident of May 1929, when Zoergiebel, the Berlin Police President, ordered the police to fire on the crowd and there were many workers killed and wounded—for it was Grzesinski who was to be later appointed chief of the Prussian Police that "covered" Zoergiebel in the Prussian Diet.

*Hugenberg Saves Bruening*

When, on April 3, a Social Democratic motion of no confidence in the Bruening Government was carried in the Reichstag by 263 votes against 187, without abstentions, the German Nationals, led by Hugenberg, voted for Bruening. Hugenberg in his speech said:

"There were differences of opinion within the German National Parliamentary Group concerning our attitude to the present motion of no confidence. Yesterday afternoon the group decided by a three-quarters majority to signify its mistrust of the Cabinet if it refused a further motion of adjournment for the purpose of tabling the Agrarian Bill. That was yesterday.

"To-day, at a suggestion made by myself in agreement with the Chairman of the Parliamentary Group, Herr Oberfohren, the group unanimously passed the following statement: 'In view of the dire straits of agriculture and of the general parliamentary situation, every measure will be taken and every attack supported if a real improvement of the agricultural situation is to be expected from it.'

"The German National People's Party to-day rejects the motion of no confidence. This rejection is due to the new Government's emphatic notification of measures for the protection of hard-hit agriculture and the Eastern provinces which are menaced in their existence. It is our wish that the new Government as a whole should take the announced measures to rescue agriculture and the German East no less seriously than we do, and that they should soon be realized. . . . We are afraid that the composition of the Prussian Government constitutes a serious obstacle to a substantial part of the necessary measures, especially as regards redemption of the Eastern debts. . . . The intentions of the Government that have become known so far, do *not* fulfil a substantial part of our demands for agriculture.

"Our distrust of the Government is based, in the first place, on the maintenance of the coalition with Marxism in Prussia and on the attitude they have towards the National Right Wing"<sup>1</sup>

Hugenberg's statement calls for little comment. He frankly admitted that the German National group had agreed to vote for the Government because it had promised to increase the fund destined—in theory—to relieve agriculture in the Eastern provinces, but actually serving to enrich the Prussian landowners, the Junkers, who were one of the pillars of the German National Party. However, this explanation was not sufficient for the extremists who did not hesitate to charge Hugenberg with opportunism. The first to attack him was the ex-commander of the Black Reichswehr, Buchrucker.

### *Major Buchrucker versus Hugenberg*

Major Buchrucker, in Strasser's paper *Der Nationale Sozialist*, accused the German Nationals for having failed just as abjectly then as they had done in 1923. He wrote:

"In 1922 and 1923 I prepared a secret reinforcement for the Army in Brandenburg Province, acting jointly with the Reichswehr. The new military organization which called itself the Black Reichswehr, consisted of cadres lying in Reichswehr barracks, and men on leave in the country, who were gradually trained by the cadres detachment by detachment. By September, 1923, the Black Reichswehr had attained a strength of 18,000 men<sup>2</sup>

"In September, 1923, it became quite clear that passive resistance in the Ruhr was about to collapse. In this situation I wanted to force the Reich Government to carry through the reinforcement of the Army for which preparations had been made. I received the money required for my plan to use at my discretion. The officers and men of the Black Reichswehr came mostly from the 'Heimattbund' of Brandenburg Province, which, though banned by the Prussian Minister of the Interior, continued in secret, working hand-in-hand with the Reichswehr. The Heimattbund was under the decisive influence of the big landowners and corresponded to the 'Landbund,' though it was separate in the organizational sense. All the supreme leaders and nearly all the sub-leaders were members of the German National Party. The district commands of the 'Heimattbund' were the *Bezirkskommandos*, with whose aid the troops of the Black Reichswehr were called up. Some of the 'Heimattbund' leaders occupied leading positions in the Black Reichswehr as well.

"I wanted to occupy the Government quarter and other important points of Berlin, arrest the Reich Government and compel them to give

<sup>1</sup> See *Der Abend*, April 3, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> See page 322.

the order for the reinforcement of the Army that had been prepared in the Reich. Everything was precisely prepared down to the details, particularly the occupation of the Government quarter. The head of the 'Heimatbund' had approved both the plan and the method of execution . . . But in the end the leaders of the 'Heimatbund' too fright; as the days passed their fear increased, and they finally succeeded in persuading the head to tell me, on the morning of September 27, that the undertaking must be abandoned. Without the 'Heimatbund' it could not be carried out, so I had to abandon it. This was particularly difficult, because the troops of the Black Reichswehr were keen to hit out and resisted discharge. The so-called putsch of Kuestrin on October 1, 1923, was only a stage-managed undertaking for the purpose of carrying out their discharge.

"I would add that I am convinced that the Reichswehr would have co-operated or allowed us to act if the 'Heimatbund' had stuck it out.

"The well prepared undertaking," concluded Buchrucker, "failed on September 27, 1923, owing to the fear of the German Nationals"<sup>1</sup>

The charge of the extremists must have scared the German Nationals, who did not want to be outdone in nationalism by the National Socialists. A fortnight later, the Party Executive of the German National People's Party passed the following resolution by a majority of more than four-fifths :

" . . . We are in opposition to this Cabinet, which, formed without and against us, is determined to continue the present policy of indemnity and Trade agreements and is, *via* Prussia, still connected with Social Democracy."

The latter reproach was directed against the Catholic Centre, one of whose leaders was the Chancellor. As we know, the Catholics were, out of opportunism, carrying on a dual policy : on the one hand, they maintained a coalition with the Socialists in Prussia, while on the other, they were associated with the Parties of the Right in the Reich Governments. This apparently contradictory policy suited the interests of the Centre admirably, but enraged the Right, which also wanted to share in the government of Prussia. The Centre was accused of duplicity, and not without reason.

### *Bruening and the Reichstag*

Among the first Bills of the Bruening Government to be discussed by the Reichstag were the Budget and Agrarian Bills (April 14). Apart from new indirect taxation laws,

<sup>1</sup> See *Vorwaerts*, April 10, 1930.



the Cabinet successfully introduced increased customs duties on food, in accordance with the demands of the Junkers. In this case the entire "bourgeois bloc" from Hugenburg down to the Democrats voted "Aye." The opposition was composed of Social Democrats, Communists and National Socialists (250 against 204). After this vote the Reichstag adjourned until May 2.

Later, on July 16, when the Reichstag rejected some provisions of Bruening's Budget Bill,<sup>1</sup> the Reich Chancellor thereupon declared that the Government attached no importance to the continuance of the debate on the Bill. But, on the evening of the same day the Budget Bill was put into force as an Emergency Decree by virtue of Art. 48.

Another question that was keenly debated soon after the advent of Bruening related to the Osthilfe. This was a proposed measure designed to bring aid to the German East. Dr Schiele, Reich Minister of Agriculture, dwelt on the dangers the Reich was running through the flight from the land (an argument that surely gave the lie to the German propaganda thesis of lack of living space) and insisted on the need of achieving "an aim of social and demographic policy by opening up new possibilities of work and advancement in agriculture and thereby checking the flight from the land ; as well as an aim of national policy by intensifying agriculture in and settling the East, and thereby turning this sparsely populated, threatened German living space into a living bulwark of German nationhood." The accomplishment of this plan necessitated an expenditure of 126,000,000 marks for the then current year.

Dr Bruening, at a meeting of representatives of the Centre Party, which took place at Breslau (May 9), made a speech, in which he said, among others :

"... A government must have the courage to lead and must be determined to see, by every means, that that which is recognised as necessary to save the German people will actually be carried through by Parliament. The gaze of the German people, which was formerly directed towards the West, must now turn towards *the East*. First of all, we want to reconstruct the very hard hit agriculture of the German East. It is not possible to help with small sums, one must re-build the economy of the German East step by step. The Agrarian program was not forced upon the new Government by the German Nationals.

<sup>1</sup> By 253 votes against 193, the Social Democrats, the Communists, the Nazis, and the German Nationals voted against it !

"Everyone knows that Eastern agriculture is in debt to a disastrous extent. It is necessary to take measures that will prevent a catastrophic outcome, and it is further necessary to bring about a recovery of the whole of the land in the East. The promotion of new and retainer colonization must help. It is important that we should not only maintain the population in the East, but also increase it, so that we can at the same time create the necessary market for the Eastern industries. The whole legislative action must be fitted into the framework of a long-term program for the succeeding years."

In this connection the formation of a "*Zweckverband Ostelbischer Grundbesitzer*" in Berlin at the end of March 1930 was particularly revealing, because this association was formed in order to assure to the Junkers the lion's share in the Osthilfe funds. According to the intentions expressed at the meeting of this association by the big agrarians, the Osthilfe funds were to be distributed by the Chambers of Agriculture, which were substantially under their influence, and by the *Landschaften*, to which the same applied. The *Berliner Tageblatt* reported that of the twelve participants in this Berlin conference of Eastern agrarians eleven were big landowners, who naturally outvoted the only peasant small-holder present. The Chairman was Dr Brandis, the leader of the so-called "Green-Front."

The Reichstag debate on the Eastern Aid program was very lively. It revealed, as a matter of fact, the shady financial manipulations practised in East Prussia by the big landowners on the occasion of the so-called conversion operations—(Umschuldungsaktionen). Thus: "... Herr Auer-Goldschmiede, the owner of a manorial estate in East Prussia managed to have his estate converted, then, at the compulsory sale, to have it bought back by his wife. The manorial estate of Kortmaiden, which had also been converted, later, at the forced sale, went to the family's seven years old son. . . ." More important still, the debate revealed that: "... in East Prussia out of eighty millions of conversion credits sixty millions went to the big landowners and only twenty millions to the peasant population, and that whereas every third big landowner received a conversion credit, only every forty-third of the peasants did so."<sup>1</sup> The subsidies granted to the Prussian Junkers in East Prussia were very considerable; enormous sums were spent for the benefit of the big landowners even under

<sup>1</sup> Reichstag speech of Socialist Deputy Mertius, July 14, 1930.

the Prussian Premiership of the Socialist Otto Braun and the Reich Chancellorship of Hermann Mueller. On October 24, 1929, the East Prussian Prefect issued some revealing statistics concerning the distribution of East Prussian Aid. They showed that out of the monies of the East Prussian Aid the peasant farms of East Prussia, extending up to 200 acres, that is, 98 per cent. of all the farms, with a total of 49.6 per cent. of the total area, received, up to the autumn of 1929, 11,640,700 marks, or 21.8 per cent. of the total credits. On the other hand, the big estates of more than 200 acres, that is, 2 per cent. of the total number of farms representing 50.4 per cent. of the total area, received 41,568,400 marks, or 78.2 per cent. of the monies. Thus the colossal sums which Socialist Braun bragged to have given to Eastern agriculture and industry, went to the people who were potential friends of Nazism.<sup>1</sup>

Later in the same year<sup>2</sup> the Eastern Aid abuses were denounced by the Social Democratic Deputy Weidemann-Insterburg:

"Both the former and the present measures of aid are by their character a sheer policy of subsidies. Already in 1928 the debt conversions were effected almost exclusively for the benefit of the big landowners. . . . The East Prussian *Landschaft*, under the management of its director, von Hippel, makes a systematic and rational reconstruction of East Prussian agriculture purely illusory. It is notorious that credit commissions have in an almost fraudulent manner given expert opinions favouring exclusively those circles which for centuries have been plundering the State and the people. We want a just distribution of the available means."

(The speaker mentioned many instances of abuses of credit.)

On the whole, the most important sections of the Osthilfe law, those relating to the conversion, security of farming, protection against execution, and even settlement itself, were all only designed to consolidate the Junkers as one of the decisive economic and political power factors in Eastern Germany.

The fraudulent policy was justified before public opinion with the alleged necessity of defending the German East against the Slav danger. Marshal von Hindenburg was heart and soul in favour of this financial assistance for the

<sup>1</sup> See B. v. Brentano, *Der Beginn der Barbarei in Deutschland*, Berlin, 1932, p. 66 ss.

<sup>2</sup> In the Prussian Diet, November 14, 1930.

Junkers, who included his best friends, both personal and political. Bruening deferred to the President, believing that his Government would thereby also win the sympathy of the Right. As to the German taxpayer, for him the Chancellor reserved the pleasure of paying the piper, chiefly in the form of indirect taxation and the obligation to obey the Government without argument.

### *Dissolution of the Reichstag*

Shortly afterwards a Socialist and Communist motion proposed the repeal of the Emergency decree of July 16, on "Cover for the Reich Budget, 1930." The Reichstag accepted the motion by 236 votes against 221. Bruening had failed to make sure of a favourable vote. The parties upholding the dictatorial system included the Centre, the German People's Party, the Democrats, the Bavarian People's Party, the German Peasant Party and also twenty-five German Nationals.

What did Chancellor Bruening do after this adverse parliamentary vote? He hastened to table in the Reichstag the following document:

"As the Reichstag has to-day decided to demand that my decrees issued on July 16 in virtue of Article 48 of the Reich Constitution should be invalidated, I dissolve the Reichstag in virtue of Article 25 of the Reich-Constitution.

The Reich President :  
*sd.* von Hindenburg.

The Reich Chancellor :  
*sd.* Dr Bruening.

This was how the dictatorial régime of the executive power was inaugurated. And this was how the parliamentary system in Germany was killed.

### *Agitation for Frontier Revision and for the Anschluss*

The dissolution of the Reichstag was immediately followed by an intensification of the revisionist campaign. This was the period of the frontier incidents provoked by Germany on her Eastern frontier. Minister Treviranus intervened each time. At a function of the Ostmark associations (August 10) he demanded revision of the Eastern frontiers as well as the return of Eupen and Malmédy. On September 11, 1930, he again demanded

revision, this time of the so-called Corridor. Treviranus' move caused intense excitement abroad. On August 15, Raymond Poincaré lodged a protest, insisting on the principle of respect for treaties.

On May 12, the "*Oesterreichisch-deutsche Volksbund*" held a Delegates' meeting at Wuerzburg, at which ninety-four local groups from the Reich and Austria were represented. The burgomasters of the Austrian provincial capitals expressed themselves in favour of the Anschluss, which "was favoured by ninety-eight per cent. of the German-Austrian population." The meeting demanded, among other things, that the dual citizenship should be granted to the 300,000 Austrians living in the Reich, and that they also should be granted active and passive suffrage; the same for Reich Germans in Austria. Reichstag Speaker Loebe (Social Democrat) was requested to submit this demand to the Parties and to the Reich Minister of the Interior. The meeting closed in the afternoon with a mighty demonstration for Anschluss in the largest hall in Wuerzburg, at which speakers of all Parties in Germany and Austria emphasised the common will of the two German countries to become reunited. Loebe concluded the demonstration with cheers for the "Greater German Republic of the future."

### *The Question of War Guilt*

Under the Weimar Republic—from 1919 until Bruening—an enormous literature appeared in Germany on the so-called "War guilt lie." It would be impossible even to attempt to enumerate all the works written on this subject by professors of high reputation, as—to mention only a few—E. Brandenburg, Lujo Brentano, Conrad Bornhak, Hans Delbrueck, Eugen Fischer, Otto Franke, F. Hartung, Paul Herre, R. Hoeniger, Georg Karo, Fritz Kern, etc., to say nothing of Bernhard W. von Buelow, Alfred von Wegerer, Count Reventlow, von Glaise-Horstenau, H. Lutz or General Kabisch.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The line of German propaganda on the question of War Guilt was fixed already when the German Delegation to the Peace Conference went to Versailles. A well-known German journalist, Victor Schiff, who accompanied the Delegation, summed up its attitude as follows: "We are all, particularly in view of the then state of historical research, honestly convinced that the greater responsibility for the outbreak of war lay with our opponents." (*So war es in Versailles*, 1929, p. 28.)

This co-ordinated propaganda naturally made much of the views of the late Lord Morley and John Burns in England, of Victor Marguerite's periodical *L'Evolution* in France, and of Senator Shipstead and the Steuben Society<sup>1</sup> in the United States. The latter society addressed an appeal to the President of the United States on September 9, 1929, demanding the abrogation of Parts I, V, VI, VIII-XIV and XV of the Versailles Treaty, and protesting against Article 231 of the Treaty relating to the responsibility of Germany and her satellites for the war. The appeal contained the following:

"On June 28, the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Versailles Treaty, Reich President von Hindenburg and his entire Ministry, in a manifesto addressed to the German people, but meant for the whole of humanity, made the following solemn declaration:

"Germany signed the Treaty without thereby admitting that the German people had originated the war. This reproach will not let our people rest, and is disturbing confidence between the nations. . . ."

"Since the signing of the Treaty," concluded the Steuben Society, "exact historical investigations have been made, and the historians of all countries are nearly all agreed that not Germany alone was responsible for the war."<sup>2</sup>

Article 231 was used by the Germans as an instrument of propaganda against the Versailles Treaty. But had the Allies of Versailles omitted it from the Treaty, the Weimar Republic would merely have found it all the easier to convince the German people of Germany's innocence. It would have said that the Allies themselves had implicitly admitted Germany's innocence and would have built up a theory of its own to the effect that Russia and Britain had been the aggressors in 1914.

### *Von Seeckt and Rearmament (June 1930)*

In June 1930 General Seeckt published a book entitled *Landesverteidigung*, in which he demanded for his country an army twice the size of that authorised under the provisions of the Versailles Treaty—that is, one of 200,000 men. This, in fact, was only bluff, for the German armed forces in reality were far bigger than this. It is worth recalling that most of the Intelligence Services of the Versailles Allies

<sup>1</sup> Association of Americans of German descent.

<sup>2</sup> Re-translated from the German text, *Berliner Monatshefte*, Vol. VII, p. 1224.

had for years been aware of the true situation, but alas, did not seem to attach any importance to it.<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances von Seeckt's demand only had a propagandistic aim, namely that of the revision of the military stipulations of the Versailles Treaty. Later, on October 22, this time in his capacity as a Reichstag Deputy, von Seeckt urged the Reichstag Foreign Relations Committee to see to the realisation of this aim.

*Evacuation of the Rhineland (July 1, 1930)*

The order to commence the evacuation of the Rhineland, which the French Government made dependent on the formal ratification of the Young Plan, was conveyed by the French War Ministry to the military authorities in the occupied territory in the second half of May.

On May 19 the old German bonds issued by virtue of the Dawes Plan were solemnly destroyed on the premises of the Reparations Commission, in the presence of representatives of the creditor Powers and of the Reich, and the Chairman of the War Debts Commission. The archives of the Reparations Commission, which ceased to exist with the coming into force of the Young Plan, were to be deposited in the French national archives.

On July 1, 1930, the evacuation of the Rhineland was completed. The Reich Government took the opportunity to issue a proclamation exploiting this success and demanding the return of the Saar territory to the Reich. After the liberation celebrations of July 1, a number of violent acts occurred in the liberated territory, which the Socialist *Abend* described as disgraceful. "Well organized bands of gangsters are venting their exuberance on people suspected of separatism. Houses have been set

<sup>1</sup> Brigadier-General J. H. Morgan, who served on the Disarmament Commission in Germany after the last war, declared at a Round Table meeting of representatives of most of the United Nations in London on December 18, 1942. "In 1923 I reported to the War Office, but it was never made public, that in my opinion, as a result of our investigations, and our control, the German army at that date, although normally 100,000 in conformity with the Treaty, really consisted of 500,000 newly-trained men, trained since the Treaty of Versailles under our very noses. In reply I was informed by the Director of Military Intelligence: We think yours is a conservative estimate. Unfortunately, that was never told to the people or to Parliament and the world, and Germany was able to get away with it by spreading the legend that she was totally and completely disarmed." (From *Evening Standard*, December 18, 1942.)

on fire, shops devastated and plundered, the furniture of flats destroyed, pianos thrown into the streets . . ."<sup>1</sup> All this happened with the approval of the Right Wing Parties and under the eye of the police, who did not intervene. M. de Margerie, the French Ambassador in Berlin, called at the Wilhelmstrasse and stated on behalf of his Government that the persecution of alleged separatists in the liberated territory was in conflict with the international agreements made at the Hague Conference. In fact, the German Government had expressly undertaken to prevent any violence against former separatists, but nevertheless allowed the nationalists to take their revenge.

### *Dissensions within the Nazi Party*

As regards Adolf Hitler's National Socialist movement, it may be recalled that besides S.A. units, under the command of the Austrian Captain Pfeffer, head of the Brown Shirts, there were motorised contingents under the command of Herr Huehnlein, created on March 28, 1930, the day after the advent of Bruening. It was a primary aim with Hitler to ensure the rapid transportation of his armed partisans to the meetings he proposed to hold all over the country.

During the summer of 1930, a "Palace revolution" took place within the Nazi camarilla. It arose from the personal divergencies or mutual jealousies of the acolytes who were struggling for second place. Thus Otto Strasser, publisher of the *Berliner Arbeiterzeitung* and a number of weeklies, who had a rival in the more able Dr Goebbels, publisher of the *Angriff*, refused the order to subordinate himself to the official publisher of the Party, Franz Eher of Munich, while Captain Stennes, commander of the S.A. of Berlin, incited his men to revolt, and Captain Pfeffer proved incapable of imposing Hitler's authority. Hitler therefore gave orders for the immediate expulsion of Otto Strasser and Stennes from the National Socialist Party, and removed Pfeffer from his post. He then looked round for someone to whom to entrust the direction of the S.A. Hermann Goering, the ace of the Richthofen squadron in the last war, was eager to undertake the task, but Hitler had

<sup>1</sup> *Der Abend*, July 7, 1930.



someone else in mind—Ernst Roehm, with whom he had quarrelled some time earlier and who was now an instructor in the Bolivian Army, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Pending Roehm's return, Hitler preferred to keep the direction of the S.A. in his own hands.

Otto Strasser, who was too intellectual for Hitler, decided to found his own party, the Revolutionary National Socialist Party, which subsequently changed into the "Black Front." Otto parted from his brother Gregor, who at that time was still submissive to the will of the Fuehrer and stayed in the Party. In his *Aufbau des deutschen Sozialismus* (Development of German Socialism<sup>1</sup>), Otto Strasser explains the incombabilities between himself and the Fuehrer that led to a break in July 1930. It is revealing in this connection to recall the essential parts of the Manifesto (July 4) on the formation of the "Black Front," that is, the Opposition group led, in addition to Otto Strasser, by the well-known Junker Count E. von Reventlow, Major Buchrucker, ex-chief of the Black Reichswehr, the Pan-Germanist Professor von Leers and others.

This manifesto<sup>2</sup> contained, among other things, the following :

"For months past we have been following with deep concern the development of the NSDAP and have noted with increasing anxiety how the Party has, more and more frequently, and in more and more questions, infringed the ideal of National Socialism.

"The Party has adopted in numerous questions of foreign policy, an attitude which it has been more and more difficult to bring into consonance with the twenty-five Points,<sup>3</sup> in which alone we see the program of the Party.

"... To us support of the struggle of the Indian people for their liberation from British rule and capitalist exploitation has been a necessity which imposes itself through the fact that any weakening of a Power that is a Party to the Versailles Treaty is favourable to the German policy of liberation.

"... We therefore feel that the policy of the Party Executive, who have openly ranged themselves on the side of British imperialism and against the Indian struggle for freedom, is contrary to the real interests of Germany, no less than to the ideology of National Socialism.

"We have always conceived of National Socialism as being by its very nature a Pan-German movement, not the least of whose internal

<sup>1</sup> Second edition, pp. 123-124 and 137-138.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Nationalsozialist* ("The National Socialist"), No. 110, July 4, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> For text of the twenty-five Points, see above, p. 330.

tasks is the creation of a national Greater Germany, with the elimination of individual Statehood arising from dynastic, religious or arbitrary causes (Napoleon's intervention), through which the unified aggregation of the national forces that are required for liberation and self-assertion can never be achieved."

The "Black Front" was in reality trying to exercise the devil with the aid of Beelzebub, and the whole quarrel boiled down to a question of personal and internal manoeuvres, without any apparent fundamental divergencies.

### *Reichstag Elections of September 14, 1930*

While Hitler was thus settling these rather unimportant cases of indiscipline, Bruening, as we have seen, was carrying on a deliberate struggle with the parliamentary régime. He had dissolved the Reichstag by a dictatorial act, and the new elections were fixed for September 14, 1930.

The unforeseen result of the new elections was that the National Socialists made enormous gains. Hitler, who, against the wishes of the younger and more doctrinaire elements, like Otto Strasser, had forced upon his Party an alliance with Hugenberg, had clearly foreseen the fruits of this alliance. Dipping deep into the pockets of the big industrialists, it was he and not the creditor Hugenberg who was going to reap the benefit at the elections. Actually, the National Socialist Party, which at the 1928 elections had obtained only 800,000 votes, polled 6,401,210 in 1930, thus becoming the second largest political party in Germany. However, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) was still in the lead with eight-and-a-half million electors. The results for 1930 were as follows:

	Seats.
1. SPD (Socialists) ... ..	143
2. NSDAP (Hitlerites) ... ..	107
3. KPD (Communists) ... ..	77
4. Catholic Centre ... ..	68
5. Nationals (Hugenberg) ... ..	41
6. People's Party ... ..	30
7. Agrarian Party (Landvolk) ... ..	26
8. Economic Party ... ..	23
9. Democrats ... ..	20
10. Bavarian Party ... ..	19

The number of the Marxist voters had remained almost stationary (the SPD had lost half-a-million votes, the

Communists gained a million), while the Nazi Party had benefited from the fact that the Germans had gone to the polling booths in larger numbers than at the 1928 elections. There were thirty-five millions voters as compared with thirty-one millions, the whole of the difference falling to the benefit of Adolf Hitler. It should not be forgotten that this result was obtained on the morrow of the Rhineland evacuation, which was intended by the Western Powers to appease German public opinion and strengthen the moderate parties.

Nevertheless, the key to the situation remained still in the hands of the parties representing the Weimar régime. At this crossroad they could still have chosen the path leading to the defence of the Constitution and of parliamentary government. Was the newly elected Reichstag going to oppose the policy based on the notorious Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution? And, above all, what were the Socialists, still representing the strongest party in the country (with a Socialist, Loebe, elected as Speaker), going to do? And what was the Chancellor himself going to do?

Apart from his 200 conservative adherents in the Reichstag, Dr Bruening also had the support of the Social Democrats. When, on October 18, 1930, the majority of the Reichstag proposed to place the question of the Emergency Decrees under Article 48 into the hands of a parliamentary commission, whose appointment alone would have endangered the risk of a vote against the Government, the Socialists finally decided to continue with the agenda without debating the matter. Thus it was with the connivance of the Socialist Party that Bruening was enabled to continue to rule Germany in spite of and against the Reichstag.

While Bruening was reassuring the foreign world as to the meaning of the evolution that had just taken place in his country, the result of the elections was viewed with pleasure in some quarters abroad.

"It is not hatred and the threat of war," declared Herr Bruening in a Press interview,<sup>1</sup> "that has emerged from the polling booths on the 14th September, but an expression of a deeply oppressed, yet strong people, that is struggling

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Petit Parisien*, November 3, 1930.

for its national future." Across the Channel, Lord Rothermere was satisfied—and he was certainly not alone in this—that the September elections in Germany represented "an important stage in the history of Europe." Astonishingly, in describing his visit to Munich and to the National Socialist Party, he pronounced "in favour of the Union of Austria to Germany and the return of the African colonies to Germany."<sup>1</sup> That was the conclusion he drew from the result of the election! The author of *Mein Kampf* must have experienced a thrill of joy. Bruening had not dared, or not yet, to be quite so outspoken.

The watchword of German policy—after its success at Locarno, after the revision of Reparations, after the pocketing of thousands of millions of foreign money, after the Rhineland evacuation, etc.—was to reassure and lull to sleep the Western democracies. However, the tone was already beginning to change somewhat. There was already a note of menace here and there in a number of German speeches and statements:

"My adherence to an active policy of revision," declared Reich Minister Treviranus, "without any threat of war, is naturally the expression of the feeling of the Front generation. We must be clear; foreign countries will become accustomed to it that we want to interpret our European mission in the spirit of the front and want—of course without force of arms—to set aside the wrong dictation."<sup>2</sup>

"I most decidedly refute," said General Groener,<sup>3</sup> "any rumours charging the Reichswehr that it is carrying on a separate foreign policy. . . . It is not the German Wehrmacht that is threatening the peace of Europe. We *are* disarmed. We demand most emphatically, as the British Foreign Secretary has done in Geneva, that the other countries should at least also carry out their solemn undertaking to disarm. . . . How many lies have been told about the Reichswehr in recent months! Generals with a desire for dictatorship, political unreliability, etc. But do not these attacks on the numerically small Reichswehr constitute a confirmation and recognition of the increasing importance of the armed forces in the State?"

And Dr Bruening, playing on the usual German motto that the Reich must be well defended in order to avoid being attacked, said before the new Reichstag:

"The Government refuses to embark on an adventurous policy. What excites the German people, and particularly our youth, to the depths,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Daily Mail*, September 25, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> Election speech in Kassel, August 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Speech delivered during Reichswehr exercises, September 16-18, 1930.

is the fact that now, after the deep disappointment over the non-observance of Wilson's Points, even those provisions of the Treaty of Versailles that are in our favour are not being kept by our opponents.

"... It is all the more important that our Armed Forces, in view of their heavy task of guaranteeing the security of Germany despite the enormous difference in armaments, should receive powerful support both in the material and moral sense. The Government... will always work for the preservation of the German people's capacity to defend itself."

On the same day, Gregor Strasser said :

"We do not want a new war. But we are not afraid of it if mobilisation of German power should prove to be the ultimate means of restoring German freedom."

The Prussian Premier, Otto Braun, made a great speech on November 24, at Koenigsberg, when the corner stone of the new building of the High School of Commerce was laid. He pointed out, among other things :

"... the injustice inflicted on Germany by the severance of East Prussia from the Motherland

"We shall always protest against this injustice ; we shall never agree that the new demarcation of frontiers, which is arbitrary and unjust, and has been effected by force, is justified. It will always constitute a thorn in the German national organism and stand in the way of a true pacification of Europe."

On November 3, 1930, Chancellor Bruening again claimed "equal security" for Germany.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of France were much concerned by these developments. French politicians, as Maginot, Painlevé and Édouard Herriot, insisted upon security and opposed revision of the Versailles Treaty. And while the first German Air Force exercises were taking place at Koenigsberg, capital of East Prussia, the German Foreign Secretary, Dr Curtius, addressing the Reichstag (November 20) gave the assurance that Germany would not "tear up" the Young Plan, but added that Germany had given "no guarantee as to its feasibility."

The following incident provides an excellent illustration of the mentality prevailing in official circles. On December 10, the Chief Film Censorship, under the chairmanship of Ministerial Director Seeger, banned the Remarque film *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In announcing the decision Dr Seeger explained that the film was injurious to German

<sup>1</sup> Interview with *Petit Parisien* correspondent, November 3, 1930.

prestige abroad, because it described the collapse of the German Army. On the other hand, the film *The Stahlhelm on the Rhine*, which had also been banned by the film censorship, was released from the ban at the meeting of the film censors on December 18.

The mentality of the German ruling class was similarly reflected by another incident which took place after the evacuation of the Rhineland had been decided, but before it was carried out. In March 1930 the "Cercle du Faubourg" in Paris organized a meeting, to which a few German politicians were invited. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the question: "Is the German people in favour of peace?" "Would the ex-servicemen of the last war fight in a new one?" Herr Arnold Rechberg, a well-known German industrialist who was among the most active German emissaries in France, gave a frank answer:

"I am firmly convinced that in a new war all former combatants would fight again, no matter who the adversary might be. The overwhelming majority of the German people will have no reconciliation with its former adversaries, and particularly with France, so long as the Versailles Treaty remains in being. If some German politicians of the Left tell the French the contrary, they do so only out of diplomacy. Germans want to shake off the Versailles Treaty at all costs, even by means of a new war."

### *German "Justice"*

When in March 1919, the murderers of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were tried by Court Martial, the guilty officers and soldiers were tried by their own comrades.<sup>1</sup> One of the judges was a Naval Captain Canaris.<sup>2</sup> The Prosecutor was Court Martial Advocate Jorns. One of the accused, Lieutenant Vogel, who was particularly seriously involved and was suspected of being one of the principal culprits, was able to flee abroad with a false passport before judgment was given, and only Rifleman Runge was sentenced to a not too long term of imprisonment. Herr

<sup>1</sup> See page 237.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Canaris, had been ADC to War Minister Noske, and later became head of a department at the Admiralty and First Officer on board of a cruiser. In January, 1931, he acted as Chief of Staff of the North Sea Naval Station under Vice-Admiral Tillesen. Canaris became later the head of the German Intelligence Service.

Jorns has since been promoted Reich Attorney. Later, in March 1928, his attitude at a "treason" trial of some pacifist journalists caused the Leftist paper *Tagebuch* to publish an article, reproaching him with having dragged out the investigations in the Liebknecht case, and having, in particular, failed to prevent the flight of Lieutenant Vogel. For this assertion the Public Prosecutor's Department instituted an action for public slander against Josef Bornstein, editor of the *Tagebuch*. On April 27, 1929, Landesgerichtsdirektor Dr Marcard gave judgment: the defendant, Bornstein, was acquitted, with costs against the Treasury. It was said in the judgment that the gist of the article complained of was that Herr Jorns possessed neither the moral nor the intellectual qualifications for his prominent office as Reich Attorney. The evidence advanced was that, being in charge of the investigation, he had aided the murderers. This assertion was supported by a number of examples. In these circumstances Reich Attorney Jorns must be reproached with the fact—concluded the judgment—that through his conduct of the investigation he had helped the accused.

In the course of this hearing it was stated<sup>1</sup> that the Executive of the National Federation of German Officers had collected a large sum of money for the flight of the officers arrested after the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. Part of the money was handed to the sister of one of the defendants, Captain-Lieutenant von Pflugk-Hartung, and to one of the members of the Court Martial, Naval Captain Canaris, the latter being aware of what it was for. It was also mentioned that the Reichswehr Minister Gessler had on January 25, 1926, defended Canaris, in the Reichstag, against accusations levelled at him on account of complicity in the flight of the accused officers.<sup>2</sup>

The higher courts did not uphold the judgment of the Berlin court; it had been too impartial as compared with the general tendency of German justice, which was severe with writers of the Left and with pacifists, but full of indulgence for the Right-Wing extremists, particularly the officers. In February 1930, Bornstein was fined 100 marks

<sup>1</sup> Testimonial of Dr Bredereck, f. barrister-at-law in Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> See *Berliner Tageblatt*, January 22 and 24, 1931.

by a Court of Appeal. The case was then referred to the Reichsgericht which, on July 8, 1930, ordered a re-trial of the case. It was heard before the Berlin Penal Chamber in January 1931. This time, Bernstein was fined 500 marks.

### *Two Misleading Nazi Moves*

*The Voelkischer Beobachter* of October 16 published the following Nazi motion, which had been labelled in the Reichstag :

“ The Reichstag shall resolve : The entire property of the banking and Bourse magnates, of Eastern Jews and other foreigners who have immigrated since August 1, 1914, and of their families and relations, and also increases of property acquired since that date through profits from the war, revolution, inflation, or deflation, shall be confiscated for the benefit of the German people without compensation. All large banks, including the so-called Reichsbank, to become the property of the State without delay.

Berlin, October 14, 1930.

Dr Frick, Buch, Dreher, Ritter von Epp, Feder (Saxony),  
Dr Frank II., Dr Goebbels, Goering, Meyer-Quade,  
Count zu Reventlow, Stoehr, Strasser, Stuertz, Wagner,  
Willikens ”

At the same time, the Berlin Gau of the National Socialist Party issued a strike appeal to the metal workers, signed by Goebbels, in which it was stated : “ The struggle is for daily bread *versus* the Dawes and Young policy . . . No wheel must turn and no hand must move a tool. Anyone working as a strike breaker will be expelled from the National Socialist Party . . . ” One hundred and twenty-six thousand workers responded to the appeal. According to *Vorwaerts* this was a “ defensive struggle ” against the Berlin Metal Industrialists who had previously given notice to terminate the wages agreement as from October 1, without stating their reason.

Of course, this soapbox oratory on social questions was designed to rally the workers to the National Socialist cause, and signified no real concern for the welfare of the workers. Hitler and his lieutenants were too closely tied to the industrialists and bankers, the source of subsidies for the Party, to undertake anything against the interests of the capitalist class.



*The Reichstag Debate*

On December 1, President von Hindenburg promulgated an Emergency Decree, based on Article 48 of the Constitution, relating to the Security of Economy and Finance. On December 6, immediately on the re-assembly of the Reichstag, a motion for the repeal of the Emergency Decrees was tabled, but was rejected by 292 votes against 254. The German Nationals, Economic Party, the Landvolk Party, the Nazis and the Communists voted for repeal of the Decrees; on the other hand, the Social Democrats, Centre, the Bavarian People's Party, German People's Party, the Christian Social Volksdienst, the new German State Party (former Democrats), the German Peasant Party and the Volksnationale Reichsvereinigung (Jungdeutsche) voted against repeal, *i.e.*, for Bruening. Already, on October 1, when Bruening had submitted a comprehensive scheme for the "recovery of the Reich's finances and Germany economy," the Social Democrats had expressed to him their readiness to co-operate. At that time a motion of "No Confidence" in the Reich Government was also defeated by 291 votes against 255, with one abstention.

Also in December, a Communist motion for the payment of Winter help to unemployed people and those receiving small social or other annuities and also to all who were entitled to welfare payments, was defeated in a nominal division by 284 votes against 183 (*i.e.*, Communists, Nazis, German Nationals and the Landvolk).

*The Coming Man?*

The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* in its Christmas number, 1930, published a symposium on the desirability of a Hitler Government. General von Seeckt answered with an unqualified Yes. Most interesting was the statement of the Rostock historian, Professor Schuessler, who said: "Too early." This view coincided with that of leading Nazi Party circles. Dr Schacht expressed the view that it was impossible "to govern against the strong extreme Right." Some weeks before, at a gathering of the Bavarian People's Party, Dr Schacht made open propaganda for

Hitler. When his attention was called to the general displeasure of the audience, he corrected himself, in a private circle, as follows :

" . . . It is necessary to evaluate correctly, not only political leaders, but also political currents. That the leader we are confronted with happens to be Herr Hitler, is due to the fact that it has not occurred to anyone else to take this national movement in hand. He who disregards this movement is surrendering this country and this people. That is all I meant to say. I am convinced that this national will exists not only among the people round Hitler. Hitler has no idea of politics. Hitler is not a political leader, but the masses behind him, with their vague urge for self-assertion in the council of nations and their need for living space, it is they alone that count."<sup>1</sup>

*The Crisis (Strikes, Unemployment, Exports, Price Index)*

The withdrawal of the American loans, in consequence of the world economic crisis, was naturally bound to cause a shock to German economy.

The Berlin metal workers strike of October 1930 had not been the only one. On January 2, 1931, it was the turn of the Ruhr. In June of the same year there were strikes and disorders in a large number of towns in Saxony and the Rhineland, as well as in Bremen and Hamburg. Many German factories were obliged to close down. Unemployment grew from half a million in 1924 to 1,255,000 in 1927, 2,019,000 in the autumn of 1929, 3,484,000 by mid-November 1930, 3,762,000 by December 1, 1930, 3,977,000 by mid-December 1930, 4,367,000 by New Year 1931, and 4,765,000 by mid-January 1931. Another million was added to this in the course of 1932.

German propaganda skilfully exploited the situation, throwing the " odium " for it on Reparations, and omitting to mention that the prime cause of unemployment was the frenetic rationalisation due to inflation and foreign loans.

Yet a comparison of the German figures for 1930-1931 with the British and American figures, based on German statistics,<sup>2</sup> shows that the percentage of unemployed in Germany was 13.1 per cent. in 1930, and 16.9 per cent in 1931 ; in the U.S.A. 15.5 per cent. in 1930, and 20.7 per

<sup>1</sup> From *Berliner Tageblatt*, December 31, 1930

<sup>2</sup> *Statistisches Reichsamt* (Statistic Office of the Reich) See *Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 15, 1932.

cent. in 1931; and in Britain 12 per cent. in 1930, and 12.8 per cent. in 1931.

In other words, the crisis was not confined to Germany alone, but affected all the industrial countries.

As a result of the general crisis the exports of the principal exporting countries had already in 1930 considerably decreased as compared with the previous year:

Japan, 31.8 per cent.; U.S.A., 26.7 per cent.; Australia, 25.8 per cent.; Canada, 25.1 per cent.; Great Britain, 21.8 per cent.; Italy, 20.4 per cent.; Switzerland, 18.3 per cent.; Belgium and Luxemburg, 17.4 per cent.; Sweden, 14.7 per cent.; France, 14.6 per cent.; Holland, 13.6 per cent. Germany was twelfth and last on the list with a decrease of only 10 per cent.

As regards the price index, it fell in Germany also, though—here again—not so steeply as in the United States or Britain:

			Germany.	Britain.	U.S.A.
1929	...	...	137.2	136.5	138.3
1930	...	...	124.6	119.5	123.8
1931	...	...	107.1	83.6	98.0

On the whole, all this was inconsistent with the woefulness of the Reich's lamentations.

### "*Osthilfe*"

At the beginning of 1931, negotiations took place between the Reich and Prussia concerning the new scheme of the Eastern Aid. The Reich Government had prepared two Bills—the actual Eastern Aid Law and a Bill to promote agricultural settlement. On the basis of these two laws approximately two thousand million Reichsmark were to be placed at the disposal of the German East. When the Reichstag resumed the debate on the second reading of the Eastern Aid Law in March 1931, Reich Minister Treviranus declared that from 1931 to 1939, Eastern Aid would involve an expenditure of at least 950 millions, and in addition, 1,140 in respect of credits, budgetary expenditure, equipment and mortgages, or a total of about two thousand million marks. On March 26, the law was passed by an overwhelming majority of 309 votes.<sup>1</sup> Con-

<sup>1</sup> After this vote, the Reichstag adjourned until October 13.

sidering Germany's constant complaints about her financial difficulties, this was undoubtedly a colossal item, destined to safeguard the estates of the Junkers.

*Navy Budget and Split among the Socialists*

On March 11 the Reichstag Budget Committee discussed the Navy Budget. On the question of granting the first instalment for the armoured cruiser B., the Social Democrat Deputy Huenlich said that the Social Democratic Group would accept the financial burden entailed by the naval program if it were balanced by a corresponding relief in the field of social policy. As such counter-part was not provided by the Reich budget, the Socialists would abstain from voting on this first instalment. The State Party (Democrats) declared that they would vote for the instalment without linking it with political compensation in other spheres, while the Catholic Centre Party stressed that Germany must exhaust every possibility left to the Wehrmacht by the Versailles Treaty—hence it would vote for the instalment.

The Reichstag, in a nominal division, passed the building instalment by 180 votes, the Social Democrats—108 votes—abstaining. The Communists and nine dissident Socialists voted against. But when the latter proposed a motion of No Confidence against Reichswehr Minister Groener, it was defeated by 295 votes against the votes of only those who proposed the motion.

The difference of opinion between the small dissident group and the rest of the Social Democrats later led to a minor split in the Party. The dissident Deputies, representing only a small fraction of the Party, were departing more and more from the official policy imposed by the Executive. Their critical attitude towards the Executive was somewhat reminiscent of the Independent Socialists' attitude during the war, though the former's influence among the workers was incomparably smaller. On September 22, 1931, the Executive decided that membership of the German Peace Society, which was led by General von Schoeneich, a man of great sincerity, was incompatible with membership of the Socialist group; the same applied to all who, contrary to a resolution passed at the 1925

Party Congress in Heidelberg, participated in political movements independent of the Party, for instance the founding of the independent weekly *Die Fackel*.

As the Deputies Seydewitz and Dr Rosenfeld refused to comply with this decision and kept their interests in the aforesaid weekly, they were expelled from the Party. This caused a secession from the Party, similar to that of 1915. This time, the minority which decided to go their own way was even smaller. Deputy Oettinghaus joined the Communists, while Stroebel, Siemsen, Seydewitz, Portman and Ziegler formed their own "Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei" (German Socialist Worker's Party), which had six mandates in the Reichstag.

### *Intensification of German Minority Propaganda*

Under the Bruening régime there was a methodical intensification of the propaganda among German minorities abroad. The VDA (Verein fuer Deutschtum im Ausland) of which ex-Minister Gessler became President in 1931, had 9,387 schools abroad in 1930, against 9,068 in 1929. The DAI (Deutsches Ausland-Institut—German Foreign Institute) at the end of 1930 had 1,600 newspapers and periodicals outside Germany. In addition, this Association in 1930 had a total of 34,500 German groups abroad and home groups concerned with problems of Germanism.

The "Deutscher Schutzbund" was reorganized in 1930 into a grouping of personalities interested in ethnical policy; similarly in 1930, the "Mittelstelle deutscher Jugend" in Europe, an organization founded in 1925, was reorganized. The number of denominational organizations for Germans abroad, both Protestant and Catholic, had increased. "Der Volksdeutsche" and "Deutsche Hefte fuer Volks- und Kulturbodenforschung" were started in 1930. Munich University, following the example of a number of other German High Schools, founded a special Institute "for the investigation of Germanism in the South and South-East." The DAI, in 1929-1931, published an enormous bibliography devoted to foreign domiciled Germans, and covering the period 1919-1929.

All this systematic activity was complementary to the international policy pursued by the Germans in the matter

of minorities and, of course, had the Reichswehr and the Wilhelmstrasse behind it.

### *Growth of Nationalist Propaganda*

The year 1931 marked also a steady growth of nationalism in Germany.<sup>1</sup> On January 4 Chancellor Bruening and Reich Minister Treviranus started a demonstration tour through East Prussia and Upper Silesia.<sup>2</sup>

In January Bruening made several speeches on equality and full sovereignty for Germany, and on "democracy" and economic peace. On the 23rd he spoke in Chemnitz before the Federation of Saxon Industrialists, and on the 25th in Cologne and Dueren, at meetings of the Catholic Centre Party. On January 29, 1931, Mgr. Kaas, to-day the leading German in Vatican circles, made a speech in Trier, complaining of "the hypersensitiveness of certain French groups to any serious discussion of the idea of revision."

On February 2 the German Nationals in the Reichstag Committee urged that Germany should withdraw from the League of Nations. On February 10 Mgr. Kaas, this time in the Reichstag, spoke about disarmament in the following terms :

"As regards the question of disarmament, I declare with all the emphasis at my command that to my political friends disarmament is a primary factor not only from the point of view of political realism, but also from that of ethics, and on ground of principle. But if the others fail to disarm, well, how can they reproach with militarism a country that rearms?" He also declared that the Reich Government "naturally does not agree that Germany must in all circumstances remain in the League of Nations. If it refuses to fulfil the task which constitutes the basis of its existence, then we may one day be compelled to take fresh decisions. But it is not true that membership of the League of Nations has so far produced no results for Germany and that it has only brought us impediments to our political freedom of action."

On February 10, Dr Curtius, Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared in the Reichstag that :

"All German Governments have protested against the Versailles war

<sup>1</sup> During the course of 1931 many large processions preceded by their respective symbolical banners were held by the Stahlhelm in Berlin, Munich and Breslau, by the Reichsbanner at Berlin, Munich and Cologne, and by Hitler's S.A. at Chemnitz, Gera, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Later in the year many manifestations concerning the recovery of the so-called Corridor, Silesia, etc., took place with the assistance of the Reich Government and that of Prussia's Socialist Minister of the Interior, Severing.

guilt thesis most vigorously again and again. The whole of Germany is agreed that a grave injustice has been inflicted upon it by the one-sided dictate of guilt at Versailles. The historical untenability of the foundation of the war guilt thesis of Versailles has long been proved by the work of scholars and experts. . . ."

On March 5, Hjalmar Schacht, at Stockholm, said that were he dictator of Germany he would stop Reparations payments immediately.

On March 9, Reichswehr Minister Groener, in the Reichstag discussion on the military budget, called upon his Government to lodge a stern protest against the "War guilt lie." As regards disarmament, Groener said that "Germany has completely fulfilled this pre-requisite." "We are disarmed to an extent unprecedented in history," he said, "we are entitled to demand that the inequality that has arisen in this matter through the German action shall, in accordance with the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, be compensated by suitable action on the part of the other Powers. We are entitled to the same measure of security which other countries are ensuring for themselves." France, he added, had not reduced her armaments, but had considerably "increased the striking force" of her Army.

These regularly repeated attacks against an alleged French militarism were all the more unfounded, as France represented a steadily decreasing danger to the Reich, for she was increasingly adopting a purely defensive "Maginot-Line mentality."

Another point which merits consideration is that the German attacks against the Treaty of Versailles unfortunately met with a sympathetic echo in some foreign Socialist circles. For instance the French Socialist leader, Leon Blum, published some articles in the Paris *Le Populaire*,<sup>1</sup> which placed it beyond any doubt that his Party, just as before 1914, was harbouring the pious wish that the German comrades would impose international Socialism on the whole of Germany. "If we disarm, Germany will disarm; one cannot arm against the will of the people" was the fashionable slogan of the first fifteen years following the Treaty of Versailles, for everyone wanted to oppose militarism at home. One factor, however, was forgotten,

<sup>1</sup> Leon Blum, *L'Histoire jugera*, Montreal, Edition de l'Arbre, 1943, Articles dated January 18, 1932, October 20, 1932, October 16, 1934, and November 3, 1938.

and that was that for almost a century all the wars in the heart of Europe originated in Berlin or were launched at the instigation of Berlin.

It may be added that at the provincial Congress of the People's Party at Stuttgart, on May 11, Reichstag Deputy General von Seeckt stated that if—as could scarcely be doubted — the World Disarmament Conference of the following year failed, Germany must demand restoration of her full freedom to rearm.

Then—on May 29—came the Stahlhelm Congress at Breslau, which was dominated by the most violent nationalism.

Approximately 40,000 men in uniform were present. Their leader, Seldte, said :

“ . . . To-day your grey front stands in the Ostmark and only fifty kilometres divide you from the frontier of the country (*i e*, Poland) from which threats and cries of hatred have been assailing our ears for twelve years, whose politicians and officials cannot do enough to oppress and vex our fellow nationals, who have been placed in their power by the arbitrary fixing of frontiers at Versailles. We at this place assert that no measure of internal or foreign policy calculated to bring aid and reinforcement to the oppressed Ostmark in its distress is possible except through a strong national Government in the Reich, as well as in Prussia.”

Suddenly interrupting his speech, Seldte issued the order : “ To the Proeschel Bridge ! ”<sup>1</sup> Then : “ Stahlhelm comrades,” he cried, “ there lies the German East, there lies Germany's destiny.”

While President von Hindenburg had sent a greeting telegram on this occasion, the following were among the guests of honour at the Stahlhelm parade : The ex-Crown Prince with two of his sons, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, the Duke of Saxony-Coburg-Gotha, Field Marshal von Mackensen, Generals von Seeckt, Count von der Goltz, von Hutier, Baron von Luettwitz, and Heye.

To complete the picture it should be mentioned that from July 11 to 13, a Kavalleristentag (Cavalry Day) was held at Dresden, where the Mayor, Herr Kueltz, a member of the Democratic State Party, said “ that for a German cavalry man and the German people the command ‘ Dismount ’ only existed temporarily . . . ”

<sup>1</sup>On the Polish-German frontier !



All this was accompanied by the usual outcries of the industrialists. On July 3 an important meeting of the "Langnamverein" (Association for Safeguarding the Common Economic Interests of the Rhineland and Westphalia) took place in Dusseldorf. Dr Fritz Thyssen, chairman of the Association, said: "There is only one united front calculated to reach the people as a whole, and that is German unity." Thyssen spoke also of the "Awakening Germany" (favourite Nazi catchword). His speech was followed by a statement by Baron von Lueningk, chairman of the Rhenish Chamber of Agriculture, whose utterances were undiluted National Socialism.

A resolution was passed at this meeting demanding that "the policy of half-measures must cease." It concluded, *i.a.*, with the demand for "elaboration of a German plan for the liquidation of international indebtedness."

#### *Unsuccessful Attempt at Anschluss with Austria*

It was in a disquieting atmosphere of growing nationalism that Dr Curtius, Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, on March 3, 1931, travelled to Vienna to meet Dr Schober, the Austrian Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister, with whom he was to lay the foundations of a fusion between Germany and Austria. Schober, a Pan-Germanist, was only too glad to play into the hands of the Reich. Consequently, on March 20, a German-Austrian Customs Union was signed. Measures were to be taken with a view to merging the economic forces of the two countries; the Agreement, which had been worked out in great secrecy, was a camouflaged Anschluss.

This move, of course, provoked reactions in foreign countries. On the 25th of the same month, diplomatic *démarches* were made by several Versailles Powers, while in the French senate an embittered M. Briand said: "Unfortunately, a period of stagnation will have to be recorded in our relations with Germany. The event has aroused no sympathy anywhere in the world."

On April 10 the British Government suggested that the Agreement be submitted to the League of Nations.

At the Council meeting on May 18, 1931, Mr Arthur Henderson, the British representative, turned to Schober

to ask for his consent to the proposal that no further steps should be taken to establish the Customs Union until the Council had discussed the advisory opinion of the Hague Permanent Court of Justice. Schober accepted this proposal, and also agreed to Henderson's demand to stop negotiations between Germany and Austria until the Council's final decision. Dr Curtius said, among other things, that France demanded that after the Court had given its opinion, the Customs Union must again be submitted for decision to the League Council. He expressly protested against this. When the Hague Court had given its opinion, then Germany and Austria would be free to decide. To compel them to submit to decision by the Council would mean that it was endeavoured to degrade them into nations with inferior rights. He energetically rejected this.

When the International Court of Justice met at the Hague on July 20 to deal with the matter, Professor Victor Bruns, speaking on behalf of Germany, endeavoured to convince the Court that the question had no political aspect and that Austria would not lose her independence through a Customs Union with the Reich. However, when shortly before the Court's decision, the German Government knew what was in store, it decided on a strategic retreat, at least for the time being ! Thus, on September 2, Dr Curtius for Germany, and Schober for Austria, announced each separately the wish of their Governments to abandon their plan of a Custom Union. The next day, at a meeting of the European Committee in Geneva, Dr Curtius said :

"The intention of the German and Austrian Governments with the project of a Customs Union between their countries was from the outset to make this plan the basis of more far-reaching economic agreements with the participation of as many European Powers as possible. . . . In anticipation of the fruitful results of the labours of the European Committee of Investigations, the German Government . . . did not intend to pursue further the original project."

On September 5 the Permanent Court declared its advisory opinion, reached by a majority of eight votes to seven, that the Customs régime envisaged between Austria and Germany was not compatible with international obligations contracted in the Geneva Protocol of 1922 ;

furthermore, seven judges declared that such a régime also would not be compatible with the Peace Treaty of Saint Germain.

### *The Saar Problem*

On July 13 a Congress of the German Saar associations took place in Neustadt in der Pfalz in view of the approaching plebiscite date and the final struggle for the Saar.

All Parties in the Saar, from the German Nationals to the Social Democrats, were represented. The *leitmotiv* of the speeches was that the Governing Commission of the League of Nations had completely failed to win the confidence of the Saar population. When the Saar was rejoined to Germany, they said, two demands must be insisted upon: firstly, complete territorial restoration, and secondly, complete restoration of the mines to the Prussian and Bavarian States. The need for German-French understanding was also stressed almost unanimously, though with the *proviso* that this was not possible until the Saar question had been cleared up.

### *The Hoover Moratorium*

The summer of 1931 was marked by a most important event. On June 20 Mr Herbert Hoover proposed a suspension of Reparations and other political debts for one year. The negotiations to this effect had been preceded by a previous personal appeal from Hindenburg to Hoover.

As soon as the Powers concerned had come to an agreement of principle on the terms of the moratorium, the German Government, on July 7, made a statement containing the following passage:

"The far seeing, statesman-like initiative of President Hoover has been crowned with success. The spiritual relief, and the hope of economic improvement which this result has brought with it, has evoked feelings of amity and joy everywhere. The decision to quick and decisive action opens up far-reaching possibilities for world recovery.

"The German people are aware that the final implementation of the Hoover Plan will bring them the greatest relief, since they bear the heaviest burden. The agreement on a year's moratorium could only be

reached through the understanding and collaboration of all the participants, of whom some States have been obliged to assume greater difficulties and inconveniences in the interests of a general solution.

"However, the noble renunciation of the American people has evoked a welcome echo. We acknowledge with gratitude that Germany has found this understanding for her situation in the hour of her greatest economic and financial distress . . .

"The Hoover year is to serve for the restoration of German economy and, beyond that, world economic recovery. If the hope that this aim will be achieved in the time fixed is to be realised, then closer collaboration between the nations is necessary. The next few months will afford an opportunity for such collaboration. The healing of the wounds of this crisis and precautions against a recurrence of similar world catastrophies must be the common aim which must guide the statesmen and the peoples in the solution of the still greater tasks of the coming year."

On the same day, from his Neudeck estate, President von Hindenburg sent a telegram of thanks to President Hoover.

On July 8, 1931, Chancellor Bruening promised emphatically and in writing that the savings effected through the moratorium would not be utilized for military purposes. This promise was not kept.

The leaders of German industry, trade, finance and shipping then formed a guarantee syndicate of 500 million marks to enable the Gold Discount Bank to take up foreign loans needed by Germany. On July 11 the British banks, followed soon afterwards by Dutch ones, decided to cease withdrawing credits from Germany. Nevertheless at that moment the German banks were entering a period of severe crisis. On July 13 the Danatbank (Darmstaedter und Nationalbank) suspended payments. On the 18th the example of the Danatbank was followed by G. F. Schroeder of Bremen, and other banks followed suit. On July 14 all German banks and stock exchanges were closed by order of the Government; they were allowed to reopen twenty-four hours later, but only for vital payments. The Reichsbank then came to the rescue of the private banks. For example, it participated in the Dresdner Bank, with a fully paid share capital of 300 million marks, by acquiring preference shares for that amount. The Reichsbank thereby became by far the biggest shareholder. The former share capital was 100 million marks.

On July 20 and 21 a number of foreign statesmen arrived in London to attend, jointly with representatives of the British Government, a Seven-Power Conference, which was to make final decisions on the question of moratorium and other related problems. They were Dr Bruening and Dr Curtius for Germany, Stimson and Mellon for the U.S.A., Laval, Briand, Flandin and François-Poncet for France, Grandi for Italy, and Matsudeira for Japan.

The Press brought the news of an American proposal to grant a short-term loan to Germany, to be extended until the issue of a big founded loan became possible. The atmosphere of the Conference was very sympathetic to Germany; as against this, a section of the Press tried to exert pressure on France with the threat that unless she agreed to the proposed measures she would be left in complete isolation. For instance, *Daily Express*, in a leading article, wrote that France's refusal to co-operate in the rescue of Germany without obtaining appropriate guarantees, may strengthen the ties between England, Germany and the United States. Such a co-operation, which would be based on mutual interests and not on formal treaties, would be the soundest solution for Europe. France would in that case remain isolated and without influence.

As a result of the London Conference a communiqué was issued (July 23) strongly condemning the recent excessive withdrawal of capital from Germany as being the cause of the acute general crisis. These withdrawals were due to lack of confidence, but this was "not justified by the economic and financial situation of Germany." The communiqué added that "in order to secure the maintenance of the financial stability of Germany, which is essential to the interests of the whole world" the Governments represented in London were "ready to co-operate so far as it lies within their power to restore confidence"; several recommendations of a practical nature then followed for the financial institutes of the countries concerned. The same point of view was adopted later in the so-called Layton Report of August 19, 1931.

During the London Conference, on July 21, the leaders of the nationalistic group—Count von der Goltz, Hitler, Hugenberg, Count von Kalckreuth, Bethge, Lind, Seldte

and Duesterberg sent the following telegram to Reich Chancellor Dr Bruening in London :

"The plan of the American President Hoover, originally designed for relief, is opposed by France's unconcealed intention of forcing the German people permanently under her dictation. Relief is thus to be converted into aggravation. Responsible circles in France are probably not ignorant of the fact that despair has grown in our tortured people, and particularly among its youth, to such an extent that the most dangerous currents of thought are arising everywhere. The German people, which feels innocent of the war, will not and cannot bear the unjust burdens imposed upon it. But a further restriction of German State sovereignty is all the more intolerable and unjustifiable. Therefore, the entire National Opposition formally points out that, in accordance with its fundamental attitude, it will not regard as legally binding any new obligations contracted towards France."

On the same day (July 22) the following appeal was issued by the Union of German Women's Associations, the Federation of German Women's Clubs, the Association of German University Women, the Catholic German Women's Association, the Catholic Mothers' and Girls' Associations, the Jewish Women's Association, and the Patriotic Women's Red Cross Association :

"The greatest economic crisis that has ever shaken the world has brought Germany's destiny to a decisive turning point. Unreasonable, unbearable political burdens, internal shocks, and a crisis of economic confidence abroad and among our own people, have made the danger of the collapse of German economy, which is intrinsically sound and strong, imminent. The ways of salvation are clear.

"Externally : Revision of the tributes, united measures by the great economic nations of the world to overcome the crisis by planned co-operation and restore normal economic exchange

"Internally The gathering of all forces for a planned reconstruction of German economy as the common basis of national life and for its protection against self-interest and panic.

"Both externally and internally success depends on the unanimity and firmness with which the whole people serves the need of the hour. Chaos must be prevented, the possibility of recovery must be preserved.

...

"Have faith in the power of the German people to overcome the crisis, preserve confidence and strengthen it in your own environment. By your firm faith in Germany's future, help to make it possible that, through negotiations with foreign Powers, the path of a strong people, freed from the burdens of the present, may be directed upwards."

When *The Times*, referring to the Hitler-Hugenberg telegram, wrote that <sup>1</sup> "these demonstrations of Hitler and

<sup>1</sup> Leading article, July 22, 1931.

of his most active followers are the expression of a deeply felt dissatisfaction, shared by millions of sober and law-abiding citizens" and that it was "really time that some attempt were made to examine firmly, but with an open mind, the grievances of Germany and to judge how much in these may be valid, how much unfounded," the nationalist *Deutsche Tageszeitung* stressed that this attitude showed a certain understanding for the National Opposition. What is more, *The Times* article was interpreted as proof that the telegram had produced the effect of calling the attention of influential English circles to "the dangerous and desperate atmosphere in Germany."

The sole object of these telegrams to London was to strengthen Bruening's international position, for — on ground already cleared by the Hoover Moratorium—he was preparing for a complete cancellation of Reparations. This aim was achieved later, at the Lausanne Conference.

As a result of the London Conference an International Standstill Concern was formed in London on September 17, by the Bank of International Settlements of Basle. England, France, U.S.A., Germany, Italy, Japan, as well as Belgium, Holland, Sweden and Switzerland were represented in it. The task of the Concern consisted in making contact with the Reichsbank and other German banks with regard to the Standstill action for short-term credits, estimated at more than seven thousand million marks, and in finding means to secure new credits for the German banks.

Dr Luther, President of the Reichsbank, expressed<sup>1</sup> his deep satisfaction over the Standstill agreement, which in his opinion, was the sole effective precaution against a new run by the foreign creditors. The collapse of the German banking system in July was due to the "run" on Germany by foreign capital. Luther concluded that in proportion to an extension of trade it would justify a proportionate extension of credits.

On August 15, in an interview, Dr Bruening said that he had always tried to convince France of Germany's desire for a permanent peace. "Don't talk about war," he said, "don't even think of war as a future possibility; it was

<sup>1</sup> See Dr Luther's article in the September issue of the *Heimatdienst*.

precisely talk of war that led to the war of 1914, for it caused even the Governments to be nervous." Among the principal causes of the present European unrest Bruening ranked "the exaggerated industrialisation of the small States."

Thus the diplomatic activity of the summer of 1931 ended with quite good results for the Reich.

One must admit that German propaganda met with understanding if not with approval in many quarters outside Germany. For instance, a report prepared by a number of prominent American economists who, in October 1931, made a tour of Europe under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment, contained the following recommendations as being necessary for the preservation of peace: reduction of tariff rates throughout the world; substantial reduction of German payments; conversion of German short-term credits into long-term credits; and revision of the Versailles Treaty.

### *Franco-German Rapprochement*

During the London Conference France had been isolated. In order to restore her position, she then made an attempt to co-operate with Germany. On September 29 the French Ministers, Laval and Briand, came to Berlin to pave the way for a *rapprochement*. It was the first official French visit since 1870. The French and German Ministers were supposed to meet "in view of the crisis by which the whole world is now oppressed, their imperative duty being to join their efforts, especially in the economic field, in order to relieve the suffering." Consequently, a Franco-German Commission was formed, its aim being to investigate all economic problems concerning the two countries.

A few days later, on October 4, great demonstrations took place in the two capitals. The posters informed the man in the street that there were "two nations, one thought." French associations representing together some three million members urged "sincere co-operation between France and Germany." Perhaps the Vichyite policy of the second world war first germinated in that atmosphere.



*Difficulties of the Prussian Government*

In 1931 the Braun-Severing Socialist Cabinet of Prussia, which supported Bruening, found itself in very grave difficulties. It was opposed with equal vehemence by the Parties of the extreme Right and those of the extreme Left. Towards the end of 1930, the Right wing group, headed by the Junker Reichslandbund, started an agitation for a plebiscite to decide whether the Prussian Diet, elected three years previously, should be dissolved or maintained. This action was supported by the "Stahlhelm."<sup>1</sup> The Prussian Government issued an appeal to the men and women of Prussia, ending with the phrases: "Keep away from the plebiscite! Take no part in the plebiscite!"<sup>2</sup>

This call of the Prussian Government was supported by the Centre, which did not wish to abandon its coalition with the Socialists in Prussia. The German Nationals replied with a Manifesto by the Catholics of their Party. The Manifesto was published by the German National Catholic Committee on April 5, 1931. It bore 500 signatures and contained the following passage:

"Prussia has been ruled by the present Coalition Government for twelve years with the result that our people has been sinking lower and lower both morally and economically. . . . Hence to all Catholics who view matters as we do, the slogan must be: Arise for the struggle against Social Democracy and its conscious and unconscious supporters! . . .

"The first blow against Socialist rule will be struck through the preliminary plebiscite for the dissolution of the Prussian Diet. He who has Prussia has the Reich. Therefore, help us to free Prussia from the claws of Socialism, then we shall be able to build up a Christian, respected, strong and flourishing Reich from the present ruins."

Among the signatories there were fifteen members of the Catholic nobility, including Prince Albrecht of Hohenzollern, Freiherr Hermann von Luenigk, Vice-Admiral Freiherr von Dallwigk zu Lichtenfels, Count Bruehl (Niederlausitz), the Duke of Ratibor, Freiherr von Schorlemer, and Artillery General von Gallwitz, Infantry General Hutier, Bischof-Pascha, and all the Catholic members of the German National Reichstag group and the Prussian Diet group.

<sup>1</sup> Appeal published in the *Stahlhelmzeitung* of January 18, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Manifesto of August 8, 1931, signed by Braun, Severing, Hirtsiefer, Steigner, Hoepker-Aschoff, Schreiber, Schmidt, and Grimme.

On July 31 the Central Committee of the Communist Party<sup>1</sup> resolved "to collaborate with the utmost energy in the plebiscite for the dissolution of the Prussian Diet." Thus the Communists unfortunately took the same attitude as the Right-Wing Parties. On August 1 the Party Executive of the German People's Party issued the following appeal:

"The plebiscite on the question of the dissolution of the Diet will take place in Prussia on August 9. The German People's Party, which for nearly seven years has fought against the policy of the ruling group of parties, and therefore from the first agreed to the preliminary plebiscite, expects its followers to express their opposition to the present Prussian coalition policy by voting for the dissolution of the Diet. We advocate an objectively and strongly governed Prussia, which must be a firm pillar of national policy in the Reich."

Another appeal, directed partly against Bruening, was published on August 6. The signatories—twenty-four of them—declared that they would be present at the polling booth. They included: Hugenberg, Emil Kirdorf, Hjalmar Schacht, Duesterberg, Seldte, Marshal von Mackensen, Generals Count von der Goltz and Heye, and Dr Goebbels; or in other words, a bloc of Reichswehr, Stahlhelm, Big Business and National Socialism.

The plebiscite in Prussia took place on August 9. Only 39 per cent. of a total of 26,553,847 voters went to the poll. Of the valid votes the Ayes numbered 9,793,030—36.8 per cent.; the Noes 389,155—1.5 per cent.

As the Ayes—inevitably—represented less than half of the total electorate, the plebiscite was declared void.

### *German Rearmament*

Pending the Disarmament Conference, which was soon to open in Geneva, and at which Germany intended using the slogan of "equal rights" to wrest from the Western democracies recognition of her right to rearm, the Reich was also preparing, in case of a refusal, to commit an open breach of the military clauses of Part V of the Versailles Treaty.

<sup>1</sup> One of its leaders was the defeated candidate for the Deputy Speakership of the Reichstag, Wilhelm Pieck. Pieck, in 1944 one of the leaders of the Free German movement in Moscow, received no more than 57 votes, against the 258 by which von Kordorff (People's Party) was elected.

General von Seeckt, in a speech he delivered on July 19, at the University of Munich, declared that :

"if the conditions of Art. 8 of the Versailles Treaty are not carried out, then Germany is no longer interested in disarmament, but has a free hand for her own rearmaments. Universal conscription . . . will then again be introduced. First a small but good army must be created, then a militialike institution. France will beware of occupying the Rhineland if it involves not a walk with a hunting crop under the arm, but blood. Against Poland, whose power-arms are clear, we would dare to fight if the occasion arose. . . . What Germany wants with her foreign policy is to be able to live, but also to defend herself. . . ."

Actually the Reichswehr had already in 1930 worked out a plan (by General von Seeckt and von Hammerstein-Equord) to drive a coach through the military clauses imposed upon Germany. This plan for the time being retained the idea of a professional army—that is, no conscription—but proposed to reduce the period of military service from twelve to six and even four years. And since the reduction of the period of military service was bound to increase the number of effectives, the plan provided for 50,000 more men, to be selected from the patriotic and sports organizations, the Stahlhelm for preference. The units—in violation of the Versailles Treaty—were to be equipped with modern material: aircraft, tanks, heavy artillery, etc.

General von Seeckt, on August 17, gave to an American press agency a memorandum stating Germany's attitude on the question of armaments in a most vigorous form :

" . . . All disarmament discussions," he said, " overlooked the fact that the military strength of a country is reflected not only in the number of its soldiers and weapons, but also in the strength of its defensive works. France is spending billions on her defence, while Germany, owing to her open frontiers, is at the mercy of any attack."<sup>1</sup>

Later, on September 4, 1931, speaking at Magdeburg, von Seeckt demanded the creation of an army of 200,000 men, reinforced by a special *cadre* of 200,000 officers and non-commissioned officers, whose task it would be to make liaison between the active army and the reserve. This army was further to have a supplement of 150,000 men from the " security police." All this, in the General's view, would be sufficient to guarantee the security of the Reich in time of peace.

<sup>1</sup> See *Berliner Tageblatt*, August 17, 1931.

These various utterances were accompanied by a new wave of militarist demonstrations. On September 8, at the meeting of leaders of the Stahlhelm in Frankfort-on-Oder, the provincial leader, Cavalry Captain von Morozowicz, retired, stated that an agreement had just been made between the leaders of the National Socialist Party and those of the Stahlhelm to act jointly in case of a Left rebellion. If the Reich Government were again in need of the aid of the national movement, it would not be given unconditionally, as was unfortunately done at the time of the Spartakist rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

When the German National Party held its Congress in Stettin on September 19, Prince Oskar of Prussia and Field Marshal von Mackensen being among those present, the great program speech was delivered by Hugenberg, leader of the Party. He said: The German National policy of combating Socialism was also in the interests of the other Powers. As a preliminary condition of understanding between the Powers, which he also wanted, Hugenberg demanded, in addition to the joint defeat of Marxism, the granting of a colonial empire in Africa, as a base from which Germany could carry out big plants and works in the entire continent that would otherwise not be carried out, and settlement space in the East. Pastor Traub, of Munich, spoke on "the need of the struggle for the moral right of war."

The Party Congress concluded on September 20 with a mass demonstration. Among other speakers, Fritz Thyssen assured Hugenberg, the leader of the Party, of the support of the Rhineland-Westphalia industrialists.

On October 2, 1931, the German Reich warrior's association, the "Kyffhaeuser," held a meeting at the Sportpalast to celebrate the birthday of its Hon. President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg; the climax was a mighty demonstration for Germany's "right to security." The chairman of the association, Artillery General von Horn, retired, made a speech in which he referred to the economic and spiritual distress of our time, emphatically warned against desperate explosions of popular feeling, and called for German unity in vital national questions. The principal

<sup>1</sup> In January 1919.

event was a lecture by Lieut.-General von Metzsch, retired,<sup>1</sup> on "Competitive Rearmament of the Nations and Germany's Right to Security." The speaker began with an emphatic declaration that he was in favour of peace. But he went on to show that since Versailles there had been no real peace in Europe. He described the present military and political situation, in which a defenceless disarmed Germany was living in the midst of well-armed nations, and was therefore constantly menaced. The demonstration concluded with a call that every support should be given to the German Government—regardless of its composition and domestic program—in carrying through the struggle for the German future.

Among those present at the meeting—according to the *Berliner Tageblatt*—were General Groener, Reichswehr Minister, General von Hammerstein-Equord, Chief of the Heeresleitung, Admiral Reder, Chief of the Navy, Reichswehr General Stuelpnagel, Colonel von Tiedemann, commander of the Berlin garrison, and numerous generals of the old Army. It is worth noting that this demonstration was transmitted over the whole German wireless network.

### *Growth of the National Socialism*

In the course of 1931 the Nazis intensified their struggle against the Bruening Cabinet. They had been encouraged in this by two factors: their growing popularity among the electorate<sup>2</sup> and German successes in the international sphere, which were bound to intensify nationalism at home.

On February 10, at the Reichstag, Deputy Stoehr declared:

"We National Socialists are no longer going to collaborate in this House of offences against the Constitution. We shall leave the Tribute Reichstag. We will fight for the soul of the German people as the German Opposition. . . . Thus we leave the 'Young' Parliament and will only

<sup>1</sup> Von Metzsch was editor of the columns devoted to war incitement in Scherri's publications and was the author of the book *Wehrwende*, in which he expounded the thesis that the danger of war should be eliminated if all pacifism were eliminated from politics and education!

<sup>2</sup> At the provincial elections in Brunswick they returned 43 seats to their previous 3 on November 15th, in Hesse 27 to their former 1, etc.

return when the occasion arises to avert a particularly cunning attack on the people."<sup>1</sup> (The National Socialists marched out of the House in a body.)

In September, however, the Nazis decided to return to the Reichstag, *i.e.*, to attend its sittings, so as to compel Bruening to resign.

Despite the threatening attitude of the National Socialists, the Reich Government gave them their head, hoping that it could make them change their minds and persuade them to take part in the Government. An incident that occurred in Brunswick, where the provincial Government was National Socialist, throws a singular light on this passive if not favourable attitude of the Bruening Government.

On October 17, 1931, the local group of the Social-Democratic Party and of the German Trade Union Federation in Brunswick addressed the following telegram to the Reich Minister of the Interior:

"In Brunswick all public demonstrations by Republican organizations are prohibited. But the Brunswick Government has given permission for a march of 30,000 S.A. men for Saturday and Sunday. The police permits armed Hitlerites to do as they like. Of Brunswick Minister of the Interior protection of the peaceful population cannot be expected. Request immediate intervention."

But the Reich Minister of the Interior did not consider direct intervention by the Reich under Article 48 to be possible, although the application of Article 48 in other circumstances was the usual policy of the Reich Government. All he did was to inform the Brunswick Government, through its legation in Berlin, that he expected them to see to it that public order and security were not disturbed.

The Government's attitude is explained not only by Bruening's hope of bringing the National Socialists into the Government, but also by the machinations of General Schleicher, the most influential man in the camarilla of the Reich President. General von Schleicher must at that

<sup>1</sup> The *Muenchner Post* on August 27 published strictly confidential instructions of the National Socialist Party's Executive on the attitude of members in the trade unions. They stated that every worker and employer may and should remain in his trade union, even in the socialist trade unions. The National Socialist party regarded the works cell organizations that were being built up at that time as the basis upon which the creation of distinct National Socialist trade unions may be begun in due course. Until then party members were recommended to stay in their present trade unions and, relying on the political neutrality guaranteed by these unions, prevent all propaganda in favour of the Left parties.

time have come to the conclusion that Hitler's hour was near, and it was worth while humouring him. He even promoted a meeting between Hindenburg and Hitler. This meeting was arranged on October 10, but failed to produce any result. The Field Marshal, still maintaining his confidence in the Bruening Government, treated the Austrian "corporal in civvies" with distinct reserve. He was not prepared to take any chances with the unknown and therefore distrusted Hitler.

For the rest, Hitler's methodical action was meeting with growing success. The number of his adherents had increased from 389,000 at the end of 1930 to 800,000 at the end of 1931. On October 13, 1931, at a monster parade in Franzensfeld, the Fuehrer saw with pride 100,000 disciplined and deliriously enthusiastic men march past before him. From then on the Nazi leaders multiplied these propaganda processions all over the country.

#### *Bruening's New Government*

Dr Curtius' Austrian arrangement having failed, he was obliged to propose his discharge "regardless of the parliamentary situation," and he did so in a letter addressed to Dr Bruening on October 3. In fact, the whole Cabinet decided to resign, and President von Hindenburg instructed Bruening to form a new Government with the proviso that this should be carried out regardless of Party considerations. The new Bruening Cabinet was appointed in October 7, 1931, the Chancellor taking the Foreign Portfolio. Reichswehr Minister Groener also took the Ministry of the Interior. New appointments were: Prof. Dr Warmbold, Reich Minister of Economy, Treviranus,<sup>1</sup> Reich Minister of Communications,<sup>2</sup> State Secretary Dr Joel, Reich Minister of Justice. Ministers Dietrich (Finance), Stegerwald (Labour), Schaetzel (Post), and Schiele (Food, Agriculture), remained at their former posts.

<sup>1</sup> The Paris *Sour* published on October 6 the following interview with Treviranus: He said among other things, that in the course of co-operation France would realize that her security is better guaranteed by international agreements than by armaments. The German principle was either freedom to rearm or equality in the limitation of armaments. On the Polish question Treviranus said that there could be no confidence between Germany and Poland so long as the Danzig Corridor remained in existence. Gdynia could remain Polish, together with the railway connecting it with the interior of Poland . . . (See *Berliner Tageblatt*, October, 1931.)

<sup>2</sup> Treviranus previously held the post of Minister for Occupied Regions.

*The Harzburg Front*

The reaction was not slow in coming. On October 11, 1931, the Stahlhelm and the German National Party held their famous joint meeting at Harzburg at which Adolf Hitler and other Nazis were also present. Side by side with Hugenberg, Dr Schacht, Duesterberg and Seldte, the heads of German heavy industry representing the most powerful cartels, trusts and employers' unions, participated in the meeting. The prelude to the Harzburg meeting of the "National Opposition" took place in the form of a discussion between the leaders, Hitler, Hugenberg, Seldte and their closest collaborators. When the National Socialist Reichstag group first met separately, Dr Frick stated that though there was incipient opposition within the Party against a mixture, Mussolini had also begun with a coalition government. "We shall seize power in any case," he concluded. Hitler read a proclamation in which this sentence recurred again and again: "We are protecting Germany and the rest of the world against Bolshevism."

In the course of a subsequent consultation between the German Nationals and the National Socialists, Dr Frick, the chairman, spoke of the absolute unity and solidarity of the National Opposition. Now it was a matter of achieving political power by the quickest method. This quickest method was not one of brutal force, whereby they would only be doing the greatest favour to Severing and Grzesinski, but the method of solidarity. The National Opposition was returning to the Reichstag only in order to bring the Bruening Cabinet to a rapid and inglorious end as soon as possible. Frick announced proposed motions of No-confidence against the Reich Government by the Right-Wing Parties, and also motions for the dissolution of the Reichstag, cessation of the police subsidy to Prussia, etc.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it is worth while to mention a speech by Deputy Gregor Strasser at a Nazi meeting in Stuttgart on December 5th: "It is with ardent longing that we await the fall of Bruening, which must soon be brought about, absolutely and in every possible way. That is why—and until then—the Harzburg Front remains in existence. We shall join no Government if we do not get the Army and the Police into our hands. Then we shall show the German people something . . . Anyone who does not obey will see what will happen to him . . . If France's power totters, we shall organize the German people's strength to accelerate developments in the struggle against France. An understanding with France is insanity, there can only be war with France." (Report by Vorwaerts on December 6, 1931.)



Dr Oberfohren agreed with Dr Frick's remark on behalf of the German Nationals. The German National Diet Deputy Dr von Winterfeldt stated on behalf of his group that the National Opposition must simultaneously come into power in Prussia, otherwise nothing could be done in the Reich either.

The agreement was made on the afternoon of October 11, and afterwards a great joint demonstration took place in the Kurhaus, under the chairmanship of Hugenberg, Duesterberg and Hitler. Hugenberg spoke first, then Hitler. The latter said that no one could wish for peace more than the National Opposition. But instead of blackmail, there must be real peace between nations with equal rights. After Hitler came Seldte, Duesterberg, Count von der Goltz, and finally Hjalmar Schacht. The last-named said that Germany's indebtedness was far greater than was represented in the official report, but no one dared to say it publicly. For fear that the public might get nervous, it is not told that only a fraction of the Reichsbank portfolio consisted of good bills, and that even a few hundred millions of borrowed foreign exchange that must soon be repaid is included in the calculation of the gold cover. It is overlooked that untruth is the worst canvasser of confidence. Schacht then attacked the legal insecurity prevailing under the existing system. He spoke of a currency that no longer served as a medium for the regular exchange of goods, but only to conceal the lack of liquidity of financial institutions and the public purse, and of a financial management of which even the Minister of Finance did not know how it would be carried on in the next few weeks and months. In conclusion, Herr Schacht declared that the printing of banknotes and foreign credits would not help, only the program of Frederick the Great after the Seven Years' War, namely, readjustment to domestic economy. That only required character, self-confidence and faith in God.

It is important to glance at the composition of the Harzburg Congress :

1. The political leaders : Hitler, Hugenberg, Seldte, Duesterberg.
2. Right-Wing Radical Ministers : Kuechenthal and Klagges from Brunswick, Finance Minister Dehlinger (Wuerttemberg), Minister of Justice Guertner (Bavaria), Prime Minister Eschenburg (Mecklenburg).
3. Agrarians : Freiherr von Gayl, Dr Wendhausen, von Sybel,

Sieber, Presidents Bethge and Lind, Director von Kriegsheim, Director Baron von Wangenheim, von Muenchhausen, von Helmholt-Hessen

4. Pan-Germans . Justice Dr Class, von Vietinghoff-Scheel, J. R. Hahn, Count von Brockdorff, Landrat von Hertzberg

5. Business Men : Dr Hjalmar Schacht, Dr Ing. Brandi, Dr Schlenker, Managing Director Moeller, Privy Counsellor Kreth, Managing Director Gottstein, Director Grosse, Ministerial Director Meydenbauer, Wharf Director Gok, Dr Blank, Dr Grauert, Privy Counsellor Poensgen, Managing Directors Heubst and Middendorff, Winnacker, Blohm-Hamburg, Krieger-Winterhall, Louis Ravené, Paul Rohde, Privy Counsellor Boehringer, Remecke of Chemnitz, Dr Regendanz, Blast Furnace Director Cubier, Dr Sogemeier, Dr Meesmann of Mainz, Delius of Bielefeld

6. Generals : Col. General von Einem, General von Gallwitz, von Hutier, Kuehne, Lieut-General Waechter, General von der Goltz, General Faupel, Major-General Bock von Wuelfingen, Admiral von Levetzow, General von Dommès, von Behrendt, von Luettwitz, von Moehl, Lieut.-General von Ziethen, Col-General von Seeckt.

7. Others . Prince Eitel Friedrich of Prussia, Prince zu Lippe, Prince zu Salm-Horstmar, Professor Schulze-Naumburg, President de Werth, Dr Stadler, Dr Kruckenberg, Major-General Czettritz, von Morozowicz, Director Nord, von Buelow-Schwante, Minister Jaentsch, Prof. Koch-Hamburg, Publisher Meyer-Detmold, von Kleist-Schmenzin, Geheimrat Pfundtner, Prof Wundt, von Zitzewitz, Ministerial Counsellor Lammers, Baron von Luenink, Count von Reventlow, and many others.

### *Reichstag Debate*

The new Bruening Cabinet and the Harzburg Opposition Front thus being constituted, the various Parties now faced each other at the Reichstag Session of October 13-16.

On the first day, after reading the Government's statement, Bruening said :

"The day the Reichstag demands that I should deviate from the path upon which I have entered, I shall resign. At a time when the economic foundations of the whole world are rocking, there would certainly be a way out—a government of all responsible parties ready to assume responsibility. I myself would at any moment renounce this post in order to approach this ideal. But all my attempts during the last weeks and months have shown that the agreement between the parties that would be required for such a government is unfortunately precluded in Germany. In the most difficult and fateful hour of the German people, the tendency unfortunately is to establish antagonistic fronts instead of coming to an agreement. For this reason I have decided to form a Government that is even more independent of parties than the previous Cabinet.

"The form in which the struggle is often conducted even now against the new Cabinet—I recall certain statements made at a Congress last Sunday (this refers to the Harzburg Congress)—is not calculated to give a future Reich Government the chance of success. If panic is fostered

concerning the position of the German Reichsbank, that already destroys the basis of a new Government. . . ."

When Bruening had concluded his speech, the National Socialists and German Nationals entered the Chamber.

On the next day, October 14, Dr Breitscheid made a statement on behalf of the Socialists :

" . . . We have experienced the ups and downs of the fate of the German-Austrian Custom-Union. The result has forced upon us the lesson that in foreign policy the belief that we have right on our side is not the only important thing, but that the psychological effect of insistence on this formal right is also important. Dr Curtius has been sent to the wilderness owing to the failure of this move. But it must be said that the entire Cabinet is responsible both for the beginning and the end of this move. . . . The financial crisis has shown how necessary it is that foreigners should have faith in German domestic development. Dr Schacht, the former Governor of the Reichsbank, also took this attitude. Now, in crass contrast to this point of view, he is making destructive speeches in Harzburg."

He admitted that :

"the system of governing with Emergency decrees is in itself not consistent with our wishes. We are in favour of a parliamentary régime, but the condition is that Parliament should believe in itself. Unfortunately, we have great parties, both on the Right and Left, that are on principle against such a régime. . . ."

On October 15, Herr Simpfendorfer spoke for the Christian Social Party, Leicht for the Bavarian People's Party, Dr August Weber for the State Party, Dingeldey for the German People's Party. The last-named said :

"I repeatedly conjured the Reich Chancellor to take a public step with the full pressure and authority of the State Government behind it, with a view to establishing before the entire people whether the formation of a government of national concentration is impossible, and if so, who is responsible. In this time of emergency the national forces of the people must not be left a prey to despair and opposition. Their co-operation must be invited by the Government. My group is not in a position to support the Bruening Cabinet."

Reich Chancellor Bruening concluded the debate with a speech on October 16 :

" . . . Hitler has said that even if a temporary recovery had been brought about, no one would have thought of revision of Germany's treaty obligations—Versailles, Young Plan, etc. This is a fundamentally false conception. I did not begin with a revision of the Young Plan, for my first task was, at the cost of heavy sacrifices on the part of the people, to prop up a financially unstable structure so that it should be possible to live in it at all. . . . If Herr Hitler is courageous enough not to deny my patriotism, I ask him : What prevents four-fifths of

this house from deciding to leave party politics aside for a few months and discussing only how the Fatherland may be saved, so that happiness and freedom may at last be brought about ? ”

Then followed a division on motions of No-confidence tabled by the German Nationals, National Socialists and Communists, 567 of 577 Deputies participating. There were 295 votes for the Government and 270 votes against.<sup>1</sup>

Other motions of No-confidence against Groener, Schiele and Stegerwald as well as motions for the dissolution of the Reichstag and cancellation of all the Emergency Decrees, were defeated.

It is worth while to note that the Socialists voted for Bruening without having obtained any assurances that the Government would not continue to abuse Article 48 in pursuing its anti-social policy. In fact, Bruening made all possible efforts to aid the industrialists and big landowners at the expense of the working class. His system of taxation, customs tariffs, wage reductions, curtailed insurance facilities, and subsidies to industry and large estates, had only one aim in view : to make it easier for the upper class to get through the economic crisis ; he took little heed of the misery of the workers who had to pay for his policy through reduced wages and increased indirect taxes.

### *Article 48 and the Dictatorial System*

Bruening's legislative measures throughout 1931 included several Emergency Decrees which are of particular interest, though each from a different point of view.

The first, dated July 17, was to “ Combat political excesses,” and obliged the Press to publish official notices without any comment. It ran as follows :

Art. 1. “ The responsible editor of a periodical publication must, on the demand of the supreme Reich or Provincial authorities, or the organs appointed by them, insert, gratis, without additions or omissions, notices and replies relating to facts published in such periodical publication. These must be printed without delay, in the case of daily

<sup>1</sup> The Centre, Social Democrats, Democrats, Bavarian People's Party, Economic Party, Christian Socialist People's Party, five members of the German People's Party, including Dr Kahl and Kardorff, of the Landvolk Party, Schlange-Schoeningen, and of the German Nationals, Count Westarp voted for Bruening.

The following voted against : German Nationals, National Socialists, German People's Party (except five Deputies, and two more who left the Chamber before the division), Landvolk, Communists, and the six members of the new dissenting *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei*.

papers not later than in the next number after receipt of the notice or reply. The notice or reply must be inserted at the point fixed by the sender, with the title fixed by him and with the kind of type fixed by him. The reply must not be commented upon in the same issue."

Art. 2. "Publications whose contents endanger security and order may be sequestrated and confiscated by the police. Periodical publications may be suppressed if the provisions of section 1 are infringed or their contents endanger security and order."

The second Emergency Decree, dated June 5, which was for the "Safeguarding of Economy and Finance," contained a series of new measures for the reduction of civil servants' salaries, welfare contributions, social annuities, as well as restrictions relating to unemployment and social insurance.

This Decree was accompanied by a statement in which it was said that "the limit of the privations we are able to impose on our people has been reached. The Government is aware that the extremely perilous economic and financial situation of the Reich makes it imperative that Germany should be relieved of the unbearable Reparations obligations. The economic recovery of the world also depends on this."

Was it because he was anxious not to surpass this "limit of privations" that the Chancellor issued his financial Emergency Decree of December 23? It was a Christmas present for some particular circles in Germany, cancelling, for 1932, the five per cent. surplus tax on incomes above 8,000 marks a year, as well as the ten per cent. extra tax on bonuses to members of Boards of Directors.

Another social Emergency Decree was promulgated on December 8, and related to wage and salary agreements for workmen and employees; all scales of wages and salaries were reduced by ten to fifteen per cent. as compared with the level of January 10, 1927.

Surprisingly, on the 11th, the Socialist, Dr Hilferding, declared that his Party, though opposed to a certain number of the provisions of the Decree, would not insist on its withdrawal. The reason he indicated was that if the Socialists did not support Bruening they "would be playing Hitler's game."

While working class incomes in the autumn of 1931 had fallen to sixty per cent. of the 1929 average, and in the winter of 1932, when the crisis had reached its peak, only twenty-five per cent. of the trade unionist workers

were in employment, the Bruening Government decided to place the burden of the crisis on the shoulders of the middle and working classes, and on the one hand it limited the payment of unemployment assistance, while on the other it left many out-of-works to their fate. This action was supported by a campaign against the "social burdens" (social insurance).

At this decisive moment Germany did not follow the path chosen by the United States or Britain. In America, too, there was a terrible crisis. It is sufficient to re-read the reports concerning the millions of people in America who tramped the roads hungry and in search of a job. As early as 1933 the American Industrial Recovery Act introduced bold measures by which employers were persuaded, and in some cases compelled, to draw up codes fixing rates of wages and hours of labour. Later, at the 1936 election, the great Republic gave its approval to the modernised industrial structure of the U.S.A.

While in Germany the masses were beginning to suffer destitution, the rule of "the strong hand" was intensified. Indeed, Bruening defended high finance and the big industrialists by resorting to police methods. "Polizeigas" (tear gas)<sup>1</sup> was an easier instrument of administration than an attempt to seek for an economic solution on a wider scale. It was also too tempting and too easy to throw the responsibility of what was happening or would ever happen in Germany on the Allies of Versailles.

In this connection it should not be forgotten that the German Social Democratic Party as well as the Catholic Centre had still maintained their powerful positions. The Catholic Centre always played a leading part in the Weimar Republic. As for the Social Democratic Party, its membership at the end of 1930 amounted to 1,037,384. As compared with the situation in 1928, this meant an increase of 100,000 members; in 1930, the Party still had 9,848 groups. But when important decisions had to be made, the Socialists adopted a policy of "wait and see," until they saw . . . Hitler as Reich Chancellor. They preferred to await the results of the Bruening Government's dictatorial action, backed as it was by heavy industry and finance, rather than seek a solution of their own.

<sup>1</sup> *Polizei Praxis*—1930.

## CHAPTER XIII

### INTERMEZZO : POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF 1932

THE year 1932 brought a turning point in the rise of National Socialism in Germany. On January 1 Adolf Hitler delivered a New Year Message to his followers, in which he estimated the strength of the Nazi Party at fifteen millions, the "Storm Troopers" numbering 300,000. In this message Hitler urged the Party to observe the law and promised that National Socialism would triumph within the year.

What was the Bruening Government's program on the threshold of 1932? The Chancellor wanted to consolidate his own régime and to devote his activities especially to foreign policy: the achievement of complete success in the matters of Reparations and rearmament. Opportunities to display his talents were soon to be afforded by the forthcoming Geneva Disarmament Conference and the Conference at Lausanne.

To Hitler, all these "frockcoat" conferences meant a waste of time. He thought, not without reason, that at this period of European history, when initiative and determination were met by the former Allies of Versailles with apathy and a *laissez-faire* attitude, when a policy of force engendered appeasement, the international concessions in Germany's favour would be speeded up according as her claims were more extravagant and based on *faits accomplis*.

Bruening, like Rathenau and Stresemann before him, wanted to go gently, attracting sympathy and lulling the other side to sleep. He could no longer borrow money, but a political overdraft was still open to him. In Germany the problem was in fact boiling down to a struggle between individuals differing on foreign policy tactics, but not on the substance of the program. Thus the Reich was henceforward faced with this dilemma: which was the right man, one of the leaders of the Catholic Centre, governing with the aid of the Reichswehr and Article 48

of the Constitution, or perhaps a Reichswehr General, ruling on similar lines as Bruening, or a Fuehrer with his "Alleinherrschaft" ?

All these directions were imaginable, National Socialism—as events have shown—being the more probable. As the *Frankfurter Zeitung*<sup>1</sup> put it, the Nazis were able to make "no small claim on the blind credulity of the German people."

### *Presidential Election of 1932*

A political event of the first importance, the Presidential election, was approaching. Bruening was justifiably afraid of the back currents that the electoral campaign would create and of the power of attraction which Hitler had for the German masses. Therefore he tried to win Hitler's consent to a solution that would obviate the necessity of consulting the people: to prolong Field Marshal von Hindenburg's Presidency for another seven years simply by means of a two-thirds' majority vote in the Reichstag, sufficient to change a provision of the Constitution. He approached Hitler in this sense, offering, by way of inducement, to relinquish power in his favour after say a year, that is, after he had settled important matters such as Reparations, rearmament, etc. General von Schleicher supported Bruening in this game, thinking it was good policy to let him bear the responsibility of these difficult international tasks.

Hitler, in a letter addressed to Bruening, blankly refused, invoking the Constitution.<sup>2</sup> And so did Hugenberg, whom Bruening had also approached and who also reproached him with trying to violate a clear constitutional rule:

"... You, Herr Chancellor—he wrote—want re-election to take place through a Parliamentary decision. According to the Constitution, the Reichs President is elected by the people direct. There is all the less

<sup>1</sup> April 16, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> The Reichstag debate of February 23, 1932, led to an incident, when Dr Joseph Goebbels said: "... We elected Hindenburg seven years ago because he wanted to serve the German national cause. He has done the contrary. Hindenburg has left the cause of his former electors in the lurch. There is a saying among National Socialists which is proving true again and again: 'Tell me who praises you and I will tell you who you are.' Hindenburg is being praised by the Berlin gutter Press and by the party of deserters."



reason to transfer this right to the Reichstag, because the Reichstag does not reflect the true opinion of the People . . ."

However, Bruening in a letter addressed to Hitler on January 22, objected to his point of view, placing the blame for everything on the state of affairs created by the Versailles Treaty :

" . . . Your constitutional objections are unfounded. You base yourself on incorrect premises. There was never any question of 'abolishing' the provisions of the Weimar Constitution relating to the election of the Reichs President. On the contrary, my intention from the outset has been to extend by legislation the tenure of office of the historic figure of the present Reich President from considerations of national benefit. . . . From the patriotic point of view I must consider it strange that you should attribute the chief cause of German distress to party political conditions. According to the general view, the decisive cause of our German distress, and for the most part also of world distress, lies in the state of affairs created by the Versailles Treaty, with its political and economic-financial injustice and unreasonableness. The provisions and management of this Treaty during the first five years of its application have again and again frustrated all German attempts at reconstruction, shaken the German currency, and finally, threatened the unity of the Reich itself. The fact that the Reich has been saved is due solely to the solidarity of all compatriots, regardless of party. You overlook this state of affairs . . ."

Following Hitler's and Hugenberg's refusal, the Chancellor willy-nilly was obliged, on January 12, 1932, to start organizing the pro-Hindenburg propaganda himself. A Hindenburg Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Dr Sähm,<sup>1</sup> Mayor of Berlin, to help the Field-Marshal in his new Presidential campaign. A Manifesto, entitled *Das Volk will Hindenburg* (the Nation wants Hindenburg) was prepared. Seldte, leader of the Stahlhelm, as well as the Kyffhaeuser-Bund, refused to participate. But the Manifesto was signed by a number of prominent personages.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Reparations Problem*

We have already mentioned<sup>3</sup> what Herr Schacht had said about Reparations and War Debts. German public

<sup>1</sup> From 1920 to 1931 President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig ; on April 14, 1931, Lord Mayor (Oberbürgermeister) of Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> Among others : ex-Minister Gessler, Gerhard Hauptmann, the aircraft designer Prof. Junkers, Dr Lewald, Gustav Noske, Prof. Anschuetz, Prof. Oncken, Prof. Planck, General von Winterfeld, Count Hermann Keyserling, Dr Paul Rohrbach, Prof. Max Sering, Prof. W. Kahl, Dr Solf, etc.

<sup>3</sup> See page 450.

opinion was unanimously behind him. On January 8, 1932, Chancellor Bruening on his part stressed Germany's inability to pay Reparations. On January 20, Loebe, the Socialist Speaker of the Reichstag, declared at a Party demonstration that the Social Democrats demanded the cancellation of Reparation payments, even if war-debts could not be cancelled simultaneously. The claim for cancellation of Reparations had firm supporters abroad also.

Professor Maynard Keynes, the British financial and economic expert, speaking at Hamburg on January 11, 1932, said this about Reparations :

"In a certain sense this is no longer a question of a practical financial policy, for at the present moment neither Reparations nor War Debts are being paid, and nobody can imagine either that any payments will be made in the near future. We have the choice at present between a definite settlement by a great action of international conciliation and a general suspension of payments in an atmosphere of international hostility."

Professor Keynes went on :

"No responsible person in England at the present moment desires the payment of the Reparations and War Debts to be continued in any form whatsoever. England, all political parties and groups of interest included, stands for an unconditional and complete cancellation. We now know that the whole system of thoughts and resolves of which these obligations are the expression, was a fatal mistake."

This view was shared by Sir Josiah Stamp, Director of the Bank of England, who declared on January 23 that Reparations should be cancelled, the question being not what Germany can pay, but what Britain and the other creditor countries can use of German goods without disturbing their own industrial life.

In the U.S.A. also numerous voices were raised in favour of the latter doctrine. For instance, on May 5, 1932, Senator Borah, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee declared : "I venture the opinion that unless armaments are reduced so that the burden is lifted, unless reparations are settled so that Europe can move towards economic recovery . . . there will not be, in my judgment, any speedy return to prosperity." Mr Paul Warburg, the well-known New York banker, for a time Vice-Governor of the Federal Reserve Board, also had strongly advocated the cancellation of Reparations.

*Bruening on Relations with Lithuania*

From the German point of view Bruening might justly have been reproached for many things, but irresolution in foreign policy was not one of them, although the Nazis considered his foreign program and methods too weak and not sufficiently nationalistic. On February 25 he made threats against Lithuania, a country of only two million inhabitants, in connection with the German-Lithuanian dispute over the new Memel Directorate :

" . . . In the north-east of Germany a brave population that has been German for 700 years is fighting for the preservation of its autonomous rights and its culture and tradition. The German Government has, to begin with, trodden the path allotted to it by Statute as a Consultative Power. We shall now see whether the Lithuanian Government is willing to restore normal conditions in the Memel territory, establish a Directorate enjoying the confidence of the majority of the Diet, and rigidly observe its international obligations towards the Memellanders. I shall not hesitate to take reprisals at the right moment if rendered necessary by circumstances. . . "

Bruening's Government managed to bring the case before the Hague Permanent Court, arguing that by dismissing Herr Boettcher, the President of the Memel Directorate, the Statute of Memel had been violated by the Lithuanians. Later, on August 11, 1932, the Court decided that Lithuania's action was lawful and that Herr Boettcher, by negotiating in Berlin about the foreign relations of Memelland, had himself violated the Statute.

*Para-military Organizations*

In order to strengthen the candidature of his octogenarian chief, Bruening had to curb the influence of the semi-military organizations which were supporting Hitler. It is probable that at that time the policy of the Reichswehr, which had not yet decided what attitude to take towards Hitler, was not too friendly, either, towards the semi-military organizations. At any rate, General von Schleicher was for the time being supporting Bruening and Groener in their designs.

On January 18, the Iron Front (Eiserne Front) was formed, an organization designed to link up the Social Democratic Party, the para-military Republican

"Reichsbanner" and the Freie Gewerkschaften, *i.e.* the Socialist Trade Unions. The new Front was to support the Government's policy with a view to counter-balancing Hitler's growing power.

On January 29 General Groener was allowed to issue an order in the following terms :

"I am impelled by the events of the past few weeks to notify the Forces once more of my views concerning the so-called Wehrverbaende (Defence Associations). In this connection I do not propose to enter into the clearly defined regulations concerning intercourse between the Forces and the Associations which I have declared to be of a political character, but only to throw a light on the psychological and political aspects of these Associations .

"1. Only those Defence Associations have a right to exist which foster national and political ideals and which regard it as their principal task to cultivate physical and moral efficiency in their members

"2. I oppose all military activity on the part of these Associations as a useless playing at soldiers. Wherever I find things like this, which are in any case forbidden by law, I shall take steps against them.

"3 I shall always most vigorously combat any usurpation of police or other governmental authority by the Associations. The least indulgence in this sphere involves a degradation of the Forces and the Police, the appointed guardians of internal order. For this reason I shall also never tolerate the organization of an auxiliary police. . . .

"In this connection I would like to clear up the doubts that still prevail here and there as to the cases where recruits are precluded from joining the Forces for political reasons. On principle, it is the honourable right of every German to serve the Fatherland as a soldier and defend its frontiers. Unfortunately, I am compelled to raise a barrier against certain individuals. . . . Only those applicants must be rejected who are proved to have participated in endeavours to change the Constitutional order by prohibited means. Thus the lapses of individual leaders or members of Associations cannot be a cause for the exclusion of all the members of such Associations or parties.

"The situation is different as regards members of parties or associations who, judging by their program or their actual conduct, are prepared to change the Constitution by forcible measures. Adherents of such a current are not fit to be soldiers. However, the decision whether a party is to be regarded as anti-Constitutional in the above sense, is by no means final and fixed, for even parties change their views. . .

"An exception are parties like the Communist Party, which in its program has made a revolutionary and anti-State attitude into a permanent principle of the Party."

On March 17, 1932, the Prussian police, on the orders of Severing, the Prussian Minister of the Interior, carried out searches and seized material at the offices of the National

Socialists. This action was impelled by Groener's statement of March 8, 1932, in which he said that

"everything points to the conclusion that a *coup de main* may be expected. Frick, Goebbels and Strasser are said to have given Hitler a last chance to get into the saddle legally. If it should turn out after the end of the election that a victory for Hitler is precluded, then an attack may be expected."

These measures were all the more understandable as it was a matter of paving the way for Hindenburg's re-election.

But Hitler would not relax. The election to local Diets in several German States were approaching. In Prussia, Bavaria, Hamburg, Wuerttemberg, and Anhalt they were fixed for April 24. Hitler issued the following manifesto to his followers :

"... For years, true to my orders, you have followed the legal path to the conquest of political power. Hundreds of your comrades have been assassinated during this period, and many thousands have been wounded. ... April 24 will be a day of retribution. Give those who are now in power no chance whatever to postpone the election on any pretext. If you fulfil your duty, this blow to General Groener will further our propaganda and recoil on him and his allies with a thousandfold force."

*The Disarmament Conference in Geneva  
(February 2, 1932)*

Bruening's anxiety lest internal disorders should upset his projects as regards foreign policy is easily explained. For the great Disarmament Conference at Geneva opened on February 2, 1932. Several rival points of view were confronting each other and Bruening wanted to profit from this fact.

Whereas on the Preparatory Disarmament Commission (1926-1931) only twenty-six countries were represented, now sixty-two governments were going to examine, in an atmosphere heavy with committees and contradictory legal formulas, apparently lifeless hypothetical solutions. Such a gathering was naturally in the interests of the Reich which, having a clear program from which it had never departed, could not help profiting from the uncertainties and hesitations of the other countries.

The French point of view was that of security. In consequence of the war of aggression that had been unleashed by Imperial Germany, France had been

biologically weakened through the loss of over one and a half million men on the battlefields. Her northern regions had been devastated by the invader. French historians had made a profound study of the trends of Pan-Germanism, which since Bismarck was gradually evolving into a State religion, and France knew the terrible danger threatening her. She was afraid that one day this Pan-Germanism would erupt in a conflict which she might not survive. France's public opinion was further fully aware of the extent of German secret rearmament.

The British point of view was that of limiting armaments. Armaments should be limited independently of the problem of security, *i.e.* by inquiring whether it would not be possible to forbid certain categories of particularly dangerous arms. M. Litvinoff, the spokesman of Soviet Russia, suggested that disarmament should be achieved through total abolition of all armaments; Fascist Italy proposed "equality of rights for all nations and an allocation of forces on the lowest level," while the United States recommended "proportional" reduction . . .

The German attitude was clearly revealed in an interview which Chancellor Bruening gave to Mr William Hard concerning the "impossible situation" that had arisen for Germany as a result of the Versailles Treaty.

The first question was: "In what degree is Germany disarmed?"

Bruening replied:

"Germany has carried out the drastic and detailed disarmament clauses of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles regarding her disarmament. Her army has been reduced to 100,000 men, and the most essential weapons of modern warfare which other States regard as a vital part of their armaments, such as heavy artillery, tanks, and every kind of military air-equipment, are forbidden to Germany. All fortifications on the German Western frontier have been demolished. All preparations for mobilisation, military or otherwise, are forbidden to Germany. Every item of the equipment of her army is prescribed for her. The surrender and destruction of all war material produced before and during the war, aircraft, guns, machine-guns, small arms, etc., has been carried out in all parts of the country under the supervision of the Inter-Allied Commissions of Control. The last members of these commissions left Germany in 1927 and their departure constitutes an acknowledgment that the disarmament clauses have been carried out completely.

"In 1926 when Germany joined the League of Nations," continued Bruening, "it was announced that she had fulfilled her obligations as

regards disarmament. Germany is disarmed. Of that there is no doubt whatever. The reports to the contrary that appear in the Press from time to time proceed from interested parties, for instance from foreign armament manufacturers seeking to arouse public feeling against disarmament. As matters stand at present, the military forces of Germany and France are in the ratio of 1.5. Germany's military security, as compared with that of other countries, therefore amounts to nil. The military forces of Germany to-day are not even sufficient to protect her frontier against aggression by any of her heavily armed neighbours. Germany's defencelessness is particularly obvious in the air, where Germany possesses no means of defence at all. Germany is forbidden not only an Air Force, but also, anti-aircraft defences on land. In war-time the towns and cities of Germany would be helplessly exposed to the gas, incendiary, and high explosive bombs of hostile aircraft. You will agree with me that this is an absolutely impossible situation, and one which is bound to cause the German people the deepest anxiety as to their security."

Mr Hard's next question was :

"What precisely does Germany mean by the word 'equality' in its discussions of disarmament at Geneva? Does it mean that Germany should be allowed to go up to the armament level of other countries or does it mean that other countries should come down to Germany's armament level?"

Bruening replied :

"When we demand equality and equal security at the Disarmament Conference we mean that this condition, the one-sided disarmament of Germany and the insecurity resulting therefrom, must cease. President Wilson, who in his Fourteen Points demanded disarmament and who tenaciously fought for this demand during the peace negotiations, endeavoured to secure universal and equal disarmament of all nations as a safeguard against future wars. Only universal disarmament is sensible, not one-sided disarmament. If drastic disarmament, such as has been carried out by Germany, is imposed on any single country, then that country is placed into a state of dishonour and disqualification.

"The German people, especially young Germany," continued Bruening, "feels this state of disqualification acutely, and the political unrest in Germany is partly due to this state. The German people, more especially young Germany, cannot understand why most of what is considered even to-day as the highest fulfilment of national duty by countries surrounding Germany is forbidden to the German people. . . ."

To another question put by the interviewer: "In what degree does Germany consider it possible to back international decisions with international coercion?" Bruening replied :

"I do not see how I can take up any position at all with regard to this so long as the fundamental preliminary question, that is, an appreciable reduction of the universal armament level, and the removal of the existing inequality remains unsettled.

'The heavily armed nations must first of all radically reduce their armaments, weapons of aggression and particularly aerial weapons, whose destructive power constitutes an indescribable danger to the civilian population and leads to the brutalisation of warfare, must be radically reduced or suppressed altogether. To place these dangerous and extensive armaments at the disposal of the League of Nations appears to me neither practically correct nor in accordance with the peace ideas of the League of Nations. As far as the armament level and the burden of the tax-payer are concerned, it is more or less the same whether the armaments belong to the individual States or formally or actually to the League of Nations.'

The Chancellor concluded by saying :

"With regard to the two specific questions of foreign policy that occupy their attention at present, namely, disarmament and Reparations, the German people are united. The demand for equality and equal security is also unanimously supported by the German people. Every German Government has to follow this direction. The fact that differences of opinion between the Parties as to the manner in which public policy is conducted are perhaps more bitter in Germany than in other countries, is due to the serious distrust under which the country is suffering and which has stirred the feelings of the people into a high state of agitation. This state of mental depression, and the effects arising from it, will disappear the moment the responsible statesmen reach a complete and satisfactory decision regarding disarmament and the problems of the economic crisis."

The tactics were clear. Bruening's advantage was that he had behind him thirteen years' propaganda by the Weimar Reich, which had used its psychological machine to reiterate everywhere that Germany was completely disarmed under the provisions of the Peace Treaty and that, therefore, the other countries had to do the same. However, being certain that the other Governments would disagree in Geneva, Berlin reckoned that the Conference would fail, and consequently that Germany's right to rearm would be recognised. For this purpose it was urgent to secure recognition of "equality."

#### *Germany's Military Budget.*

The total Naval and Military Estimates for 1932-1933 (published shortly before Bruening's fall) amounted to 674,500,000 marks, this sum being more or less equal to that of the previous year. The Estimates included a first instalment towards the construction of a third 10,000 ton "pocket battleship" of Class C, the *Braunschweig*, as



well as a further instalment for the construction of the second pocket battleship, the *Lothringen* (started under the Bruening Government in 1931), which had now been laid down, and the final grant for the first "pocket battleship," the *Deutschland*, which had been launched by von Hindenburg at Kiel in May 1931 and the construction of which had begun under the Hermann Mueller Government in 1928. The cost of these battleships amounted to about 70 million goldmarks each. The construction of a fourth battleship in this class was contemplated for 1933 and 1934. While this vast military expenditure was being incurred, the German Government was trying to persuade foreign public opinion that Germany was ruined and therefore unable to pay Reparations.

### *The Electoral Campaign*

Before the first ballot of the presidential election, on March 7, Chancellor Bruening eulogised Hindenburg at Essen, before an audience of 20,000 people ; he compared Hindenburg with Kaiser William I :

" An unassuming man of similarly strong and straightforward character, who attached the greatest importance to relegating himself to the background and gathering round him suitable men with whom to lay the foundations of Germany's greatness "

He also compared Hindenburg with George Washington, whose bi-centenary had recently been celebrated. Washington also, he said, had to bear slander and ingratitude on the part of his fellow men after rendering great military and political services to his Fatherland. In the case of Hindenburg it must not take two hundred years, nor even a few years, indeed, not even months, before his personality is recognised. If the German people, through this re-election, gave a clear sign of stabilization both internally and externally, then, he was convinced, it would emerge from the present hard struggle, whose outcome might determine the German destiny for generations to come, victoriously and as a strong nation.

The following day, at Dusseldorf, in a crowded hall, he spoke in support of the Field Marshal :

" not because he wants to remain Reich President, but because he wants to sacrifice himself again in this most difficult hour of the German

people. . . . The reproach that has been levelled at the Reich President that he had not ruled with the majority, is entirely untenable. Everything that depended on the Reich President has happened to open the way for the Right into government. It is a bitter thing for the Field Marshal that those who in 1925 brought him along are to-day refusing to follow him."

On March 11, speaking at the Sportpalast, Bruening praised Hindenburg as :

"a personality that has grown up in the classic tradition of the old General Staff, the tradition of Moltke, a personality that is able to see things simply—and that is also a sign of greatness in a man . . ."

On April 5, Bruening spoke at Stuttgart. Day after day, at big meetings in the South, North, as well as in Central and Eastern Germany, he canvassed Hindenburg's re-election. The Chancellor's campaign reached its peak on Saturday, April 9, in Koenigsberg, when he said :

" . . . We have held out in order to create a secure basis for Germany's foreign policy as well. Without a stable currency the struggle for Germany's liberation would long have been lost externally as well. If the Reich President and Government had not had the courage to make themselves unpopular, then the German people would have had to capitulate to foreign countries already at the time of the bank crisis of last summer. . . ."

Otto Braun, the Socialist Prime Minister of Prussia, also supported Hindenburg, describing him as :

"The embodiment of calm and steadiness, of manly loyalty and devotion to duty for the benefit of the entirety of the nation, whose life is clearly before the eyes of all, who, not least through the manner in which he has carried on his seven years' Presidency, has proved that all those who want to save Germany from chaos can rely on him. . . . A man of this type would be bound to disappoint those who expected him to violate his oath and infringe the Constitution. Because, true to his oath, he was the guardian of the Constitution to the German people, they are now persecuting him with venomous hatred, overwhelming him with abuse and low libels. That is why I am for Hindenburg"

One might wonder why, being opposed to Hitler, Braun should have found it inevitable to support Field Marshal Hindenburg, who was very soon to show once again to what extent he was "attached" to the Constitution.

Hitler<sup>1</sup> was more active than ever, directing his Party's movements from the Hotel Kaiserhof, the Nazi headquarters in Berlin. The entire party, headed by the

<sup>1</sup> On February 26 he had become a German citizen, having been appointed Regierungsrat by the National-Socialist local Government of Brunswick.

Fuehrer himself and Goebbels, was mobilized. Hitler spoke every day, even several times a day. On March 4 he went to Breslau, on the 7th he spoke at Stuttgart; on the 10th in Godesberg, on the 11th in Hanover.

*First Ballot, March 13, 1932*

March 13 was the date of the Presidential election.

The result of this ballot was as follows :

Field Marshal von Hindenburg	...	18,650,730 votes (49.60 %)
(only 100,000 votes short of an absolute majority.)		
Adolf Hitler	... ..	11,339,285 votes (30.10 %).
Thaelmann, Communist	.. ..	4,983,197 votes (13.20 %)
Colonel Duesterberg, Stahlhelm	...	2,557,590 votes ( 6.80 %).

The most striking thing in connection with the candidates confronting each other—a veteran Pan-German military leader, a nationalistic colonel of the Right, a National-Socialist and a Communist—was the fact that there was no Moderate among them.

Hitler's defeat was followed by a sudden wave of disappointment among the leaders of the Nazi movement, some of whom even seemed to be prepared to quit the party. The exception was Hitler himself, who ordered an immediate resumption of the struggle with a view to the second ballot. He knew with what fear his 11 million votes must have been looked upon by Hindenburg. Accordingly, there was public meeting after public meeting before the second and final ballot. The only salvation for the Nazis was to appeal to the masses. "Ran an das Volk," as Goebbels put it.

*Final Ballot, April 10, 1932*

In the final ballot, on April 10, Hindenburg was elected, having gained 700,000 votes, Hitler had gained two million votes, the Communists had lost 1,277,000, while Duesterberg, the candidate of the Right, had withdrawn his candidature. The figures were :

Hindenburg	...	...	19,359,533 votes (53 %).
Hitler	...	...	13,418,051 votes (36.8 %).
Thaelmann	...	...	3,706,655 votes (10.2 %).

It is interesting to note that the Kronprinz had backed Hitler in the second ballot, being of the opinion that abstention from voting would be contrary to the policy of the Harzburg Front. "As I consider an unbroken national front absolutely necessary," he said, "I shall vote for Adolf Hitler in the second ballot."

Immediately after the election, Captain Hermann Goering and Dr Frank sent "Declarations of Legality" to the Reich Minister of the Interior, General Groener, who declared in response that "all those gentlemen are entirely in earnest as regards their will to legality, but this will and these Declarations are not sufficient, unless the Party frees itself of things that by their nature are illegal."

#### *General Groener's Action*

General Groener had already on February 6, 1932, removed the Reichswehr ban on National Socialists. This order followed a decision of the Supreme Court (Reichsgericht) that the Government was not entitled to ban Nazis from public employment. But later, by an Emergency Decree of the Reich President, dated April 13, 1932, all Nazi semi-military organizations and particularly the S.A. (Storm Troops) and S.S. (Defence Formations) together with their staffs and institutions, including motorised detachments, Flying Corps, Cavalry detachments, Leaders' Colleges, S.A. Houses, etc., were prohibited. This amounted to the dissolution of Hitler's private army.

The move against these Nazi semi-military organizations was due to the fact that stores of arms had been discovered in the possession of the Nazi Party, and there was even a special Nazi Flying Corps organized. The military efficiency of the S.A. had been increased by their new commander, Ernst Roehm.

The Emergency Decree angered the Nazi leaders and particularly Roehm, but Hitler enjoined his followers to conform to its provisions in the strictest discipline. "Legality first" was his motto, until the Party came to power. Hitler was right in not showing premature impatience. Two days later Hindenburg was already asking General Groener to extend the same measures to the other

semi-military organizations, even those loyal to the Government. On April 15 he wrote the following letter to General Groener :

"I have issued the Decree banning the S.A. and S.S., you having in earnest words explained the difficulties of the political situation and having described the promulgation of this Decree as being absolutely necessary for the security of the authority of the State, and the Government having unanimously supported your proposal. I have been informed, evidence being provided at the same time, that other parties also have similar organizations to those banned here. In fulfilment of my duty to exercise my office in a super-political manner and to apply the law equally, I must demand that, if this is correct, these organizations shall also receive the same treatment. I send you herewith the material I have received, with the request that you should examine it with the same earnestness as I have applied to your proposals, and let me know the result of the examination, together with a suitable proposal."

This time, on May 4, 1932, General Groener carried out the instruction with regard to all the other paramilitary associations. According to the new Emergency Decree such associations were subject to the supervision of the Reich Minister of the Interior. These measures, by their general character, also affected the Stahlhelm, a fact that was bound to displease the leaders of the Reichswehr.<sup>1</sup> The Stahlhelm represented everything that was dear to the Reichswehr men. Its ideology might be summed up thus :

"We hate the present system of government with all our hearts because it bars the prospect to the liberation of our enslaved Fatherland, the acquittal of the German people of the war guilt he and the winning of the necessary living space."<sup>2</sup>

Now, a German government that had the Army against it could not long survive and, accordingly, the fall of Groener and Bruening was a foregone conclusion. On May 9, Hermann Goering, the new Speaker of the Reichstag, launched a frontal attack against General Groener. Neither the latter's own defence of himself, nor the Chancellor's pleading on his behalf, which was part of a big speech on foreign policy, made any difference.

<sup>1</sup> The same day on May 4, 1932, another Emergency Decree was promulgated dissolving the various Communist "Godless" and anti-religious organizations.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Aufruf des Landesverbandes Brandenburg des Stahlhelm*, quoted in Otto Braun : *Von Weimar bis Hitler*, 2nd ed., p. 283.

*Fall of Bruening*

On May 12, 1932, despite the defeat of a motion of No-confidence in Bruening's Government by 287 votes to 257, General Groener was obliged to resign as Reich Minister of the Interior. His fall was not due to a decision of the Reichstag, but to an extra-parliamentary intervention of the Reichswehr. During the sitting von Schleicher went up to the General and told him that he no longer enjoyed the confidence of the Reichswehr.

As to Bruening, President Hindenburg, under the influence of the Reichswehr, simply dropped him. When the Chancellor called to congratulate him on his re-election as President, he found the Field Marshal completely changed. And when, in accordance with custom, the Chancellor placed the Cabinet at his disposal, Hindenburg coldly and without any sense of gratitude replied: "I had been expecting your resignation. You may issue a statement that I have asked you to remain temporarily in office. I may consider the appointment of a government of the Right."

It was stated that Hindenburg insisted that a new Cabinet must abandon the proposals for new direct taxation to balance the Budget, as well as Bruening's plan for splitting up into smallholdings great agricultural estates which did not pay and which existed only thanks to State subsidies. He was determined to choose a reactionary government which would risk even the forfeiture of the support in the Reichstag of the Social Democrats who had always remained faithful to Bruening.

Thus on May 30, 1932, Bruening resigned the Chancellorship. The Reichswehr no longer needed him. He had prepared the ground for the Lausanne Conference; he had posed the German problem at Geneva, where the diplomats went on dancing their minuet round various formulas of the Disunited Nations.

It would be of importance to measure the exact role played by the Reichswehr at this time, but this is not an easy matter, for the Reichswehr did not seem to be following a clearly defined line. Instead, individual personalities came to the fore, with camarillas forming round them, as round Schleicher or Groener or Hindenburg. A

plausible explanation of this state of affairs may be this: the Reichswehr had succeeded in getting rid of the progressive and radical elements in Germany. The Presidential election had resulted in more than 32.5 million votes out of a total of 37.5 millions being cast for reactionary and militarist candidates. In fact, all the candidates, except the Communist one, were the products of the purely military mind. Thus the Reichswehr no longer had much to worry about. It was therefore only natural that personal sympathies and preferences should come to the surface within the Reichswehr. On the whole, it is understandable that when a Reichswehr man had to choose among nationalistic politicians of varying temperament, but of the same spirit, he should have found the choice rather difficult.

This is what the National Socialist "Tatkreis"<sup>1</sup> wrote a few days after the resignation of the Bruening Cabinet: "General von Schleicher shares the credit with a few other people of having prepared the change long in advance. Part of the list of new Ministers was fixed long ago. This applies particularly to the person of the new Reich Chancellor, von Papen, who, in view of his former position in the United States, was already several weeks ago—when Bruening did not as yet suspect anything—named to the American Ambassador. . . . It was intended to overthrow the Chancellor already at the last Reichstag voting in the second week of May, 1932. But the result of a speech<sup>2</sup> he made then was of such extreme importance, and his foreign political 'No' weighed so heavily, that it was decided to wait a little longer."

Von Schleicher as early as in December 1931 was said to have had some discussions with General von Epp, Hitler's confidant, about the re-election of Hindenburg, and in the course of these secret talks a new Cabinet list was agreed, with the National Socialists participating. It was a list of Ministers said to have been approved by Hitler, in which the names of Groener (as Reich Chancellor), Frick, von Schleicher, Hugenberg, Schacht and Bruening (as Foreign Minister) appeared.

### *Von Papen's Government*

When Bruening's dismissal had been decided upon, von Schleicher immediately resumed his negotiations with

<sup>1</sup> Quoted after the Information Service of "Tatkreis," No. 18, June 9, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Mainly on foreign affairs.

Hitler. Symptomatic in this connection was the fact that on May 21 Hitler expelled Editor Krebs from the Nazi Party for having criticised Schleicher in an article. However, these conversations did not produce any result and the new Government, the so-called "Cabinet of Barons," was entrusted to von Papen. It was composed as follows:

Von Papen (Reich Chancellor), von Schleicher (Reichswehr), Baron von Gayl (Interior), Baron von Neurath (Foreign Affairs), Count von Schwerin-Krosigk (Finance), Prof. Dr Warmbold, Director of I. G. Farben-Industrie (Economy), Baron von Braun (Food and Agriculture, as well as Eastern Commissioner), Baron Eltz von Ruebenach (Communication and Post), Dr Guertner (Justice).

Von Papen, a Westphalian nobleman, professional Army officer, prominent member of the Berlin Conservative Herrenklub, who was also linked by marriage with the great industrialists, friend of Oskar von Hindenburg, Meissner and General von Schleicher, Chamberlain of the Pope and a member of the Catholic Centre, and since 1931 a member of the Committee for a German-French *rapprochement*—it was he who, as has been said, was less than a year later to present power to Adolf Hitler "on a silver platter."

Von Papen's accession to power recalled memories of the political antecedents of this man, whose name figured so largely in the "chronique scandaleuse" of Washington during the first World War. It was in December 1915 that the State Department, then headed by Mr Lansing, began to grow impatient and disquieted by the goings-on at the German Embassy. A smart young cavalry captain, von Papen, had then been performing the functions of Military Attaché there with considerable skill for eighteen months. After trying—with the aid of a powerful network of German or pro-German agents—to organise a hostile movement against the U.S.A. in Mexico, von Papen had covered North America with saboteurs (explosions, railway accidents, etc.), for Germany wanted to impede American munitions deliveries to the Allies at all costs. However, von Papen, together with his colleague, the Naval Attaché, Franz von Rintelen, got themselves arrested, and it was thus that in December 1915 the American careers of these two classical precursors of the Fifth Column in America came to an abrupt end.



Versatile von Papen was like putty in the hands of the Reichswehr, that is, in the hands of von Schleicher, who had now advanced from the rank of the "grey eminence" of the Government to that of His Eminence. On the other hand, the "Cabinet of Barons" represented the East-German landowners. Von Papen was supported also by the President of the Reichsbank, Dr Luther, and an official statement said on the occasion of their interview that the two men found themselves "in full agreement," especially on questions of currency and credit.

As to the Centre Party, it was mainly concerned in the fact of its position being weakened through the fall of Bruening. Mgr. Kaas, its Chairman, said so plainly to von Papen in a letter addressed to him on June 3:

"... In my conviction, many of those who to-day see an improvement of German prospects of success in the departure from past work and workers, will in a short time realise that they have taken the wrong path."

This letter was in reply to one sent by von Papen to the leader of the Catholic Party, in which he had written:

"... Though owing to the declaration of the German Centre Party my oath unfortunately leads me away from you, I live in hopes that not only will the objective work that the country to-day demands of us reunite us soon, and this may be expected even more owing to my unshakable conviction that ruthless enforcement of the unaltered principles of our Christian philosophy must be the prerequisite of any national recovery."

### *Von Papen and the Reichstag*

On June 4, 1932, President Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag with immediate effect, "as according to the results of the elections to the Diets of the German States that have taken place in recent months it no longer represents the political will of the German people."

On this occasion the von Papen Cabinet issued the following ideological statement:

"The new Government enters into office in one of the most difficult hours in the history of the Fatherland.

"The German people are faced with a spiritual and material crisis without precedent. . . . The post-war Governments thought they could to a considerable extent relieve the material cares of both employers and workers by means of a steadily increasing State Socialism, and tried to convert the State into a sort of welfare institution, thereby weakening the moral power of the nation. They allotted to it tasks which by its nature it is incapable of performing. It is precisely through

this that unemployment has become further aggravated. A halt must be called at the last moment to the moral breakdown of the German people that has necessarily followed, has been intensified by the unhappy and injurious class war and extended through cultural Bolshevism ("Kulturbolschewismus") which, like a corrosive poison, threatens to destroy the nation's best moral principles. Disruptive atheist-Marxist thought has already penetrated too deeply into all cultural spheres of public life, because the Christian forces of the State have been too ready to compromise. . . . The integrity of public life cannot be preserved or restored by means of compromise for the sake of parity. A clear decision must be made as to what forces are prepared to help to build the New Germany on the basis of the unalterable principles of Christian philosophy."

Bruening and his fellow-ministers of the late Government issued a statement in reply to von Papen's implicit or explicit accusations, claiming to have reduced Reich, State and Municipal expenditure, between 1930 and 1932, by six thousand million marks . . .

"We did not leave," they said, "a heap of ruins, but, under the most difficult financial and economic conditions, laid the foundations for better things. . . ."

True to this aim of building up his new Germany, von Papen's first act on June 14 was to revoke General Groener's ban on the S.A.<sup>1</sup>

### *The End of Reparations*

The Lausanne Reparations Conference opened on June 16. Von Papen attended the Conference. His aim was to convince the ex-Allies of Versailles of the Reich's incapacity to pay Reparations in any form :

"I see the great historical task of the Conference," said von Papen, "in an effort to get out of the fatal vicious circle of the past, and prepare for constructive co-operation, which alone can lead to a happier future."

This view was in conflict with the French doctrine, which was defended by M. Edouard Herriot, the French

<sup>1</sup> In addition there was General von Rundstedt's Executive order of July 22, which reads as follows :

"Executive Order : 1. In virtue of the Decree of the Reich President, dated July 20, 1932, I forbid any kind of invitation to participate in a general strike, either orally or in writing, including production and dissemination of printed matter containing such invitations. . . .

Berlin, July 21, 1932

The Military Commander  
(sgd.) von Rundstedt, Lt.-Gen "

This order seems to have been issued under the unpleasant recollection for the Reichswehr of the 1920 general strike, which led to the failure of the Kapp Putsch.

Prime Minister. But von Papen urged that economic reconstruction required especially co-operation between France and Germany, rather than continuance of any kind of Reparations payments. . . . If one wants to bring order into world economy, one should not stop at the cancellation of political debts but should aim at constructive measures. Germany is prepared to make every effort to assist in achieving this aim.<sup>1</sup>

Although the French and German doctrines were contradictory, no one wanted the Conference to fail. Von Papen felt so sure of success that on June 28 he introduced into the negotiations the question of a radical revision of the Versailles Treaty by promising that Germany "would—if equality of status and security were established—pay her share towards the general effort to reconstruct world economy, of which the full restoration of economic equilibrium in Germany was naturally a condition," and he added that "the confidence of the world could only be restored if the victorious Powers would bring themselves to eliminate the discriminations of the Versailles Treaty."<sup>2</sup> It is worth recalling that it was during the Lausanne Conference that the first draft of the Four Power Pact was prepared, the negotiations on this subject being concluded nine months later.

An agreement on Reparations was reached on July 9. It was no doubt with a feeling of pride that von Papen broadcast the news to the German nation from Lausanne:

"Here is the result. The complete removal of Reparations has been achieved. Germany will not have to pay Reparations in the future in any form whatsoever. The Young Plan has been dropped. The annual payments of 2,000,000,000 m. (£100,000,000 at par) have been abolished. Our obligations from the Hoover Year are recognized by us and will be met. In addition, there is to be a certain payment towards European reconstruction to a maximum of 3,000,000,000 m. (£150,000,000). This, however, is not to be made in six annual payments, but by means of special Reich bonds which can only be issued on the world markets after the economic equilibrium of Germany has been completely restored. The final removal of Reparations restores our independence in the economic and financial sphere. It removes all engagements outstanding from the Young Plan. The Reich regains sovereignty over the State Railway Company and the Reichsbank. Economically, this solution will give German credit a new foundation and therewith create an

<sup>1</sup> Statement to the Berlin Press. See *Daily Telegraph*, June 26, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Times*, June 29, 1932.

essential condition for the reconstruction of the German economic structure. It is self evident that this settlement has nothing to do with the settlement of inter-Allied War debts to the United States. Politically, the result of the Lausanne Conference means the beginning of a new era among the peoples."

The Chancellor added :

"The question of ' War guilt ' was discussed in detail by the statesmen. Though not all the nations were yet ready to acknowledge Germany's right in this matter, this question had at all events now been placed before the world forum. The German Government will now be in a position to fight for the political freedom of Germany."

In a word, all this constituted an important victory for the Bruening-von Papen foreign policy, a fact that was not disputed either by the National Socialists or the Social-Democrats.

### *The Prussian Crisis*

The elections to the Diets (Landtag) of five German Federal States—Prussia, Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, Hamburg and Anhalt—were held on April 24, 1932. The results were a tremendous advance—Hitler called it a triumph—for the Nazis. Having lost its majority in the Prussian Diet, the Braun-Severing Government of Prussia on May 22 decided to resign, but to continue in office provisionally, attending to current affairs, for the Nazi Party had not obtained an absolute majority either. Having secured 40 per cent. of the mandates in the Prussian Diet, the Nazi Party elected as its Speaker (June 21) Dr H. Kerrl, later the notorious Church Minister of the Third Reich. The new Diet passed a law to confiscate the entire property of all Jews who had entered Prussia from Eastern Europe after August 1, 1914. The confiscated property was within three weeks to be used for aiding the unemployed. At the same time, the Diet also passed another law prohibiting State-owned theatres from employing Jews.

On July 19 President Hindenburg appointed Chancellor von Papen Reich Commissioner for Prussia, placing dictatorial powers into his hands, while Dr Bracht,<sup>1</sup> Mayor of Essen, was appointed Deputy Commissioner. The

<sup>1</sup> In 1923 Secretary of State and Head of the Reichskanzlei in the Marx Cabinet, later—1924—Mayor of Essen.

members of the Braun Government were expelled from their offices without resistance.

For instance, on the evening of July 20, Dr Bracht and a certain Melcher, Police President of Essen, accompanied by policemen, called at the Office of Severing, the Prussian Minister of the Interior, and demanded that he should hand over his post to the Reich representative. Severing repeated the "No" he had earlier given to von Papen, stressing that he would yield only to some form of force. Thereupon the armchair in which Severing was sitting was lifted up and carried into an adjacent room. Thus the "forcible" ejection of Severing from office had been effected. The whole episode lasted only a few minutes.

Meanwhile, the Chief of the Prussian police, the Socialist Albert Grzesinski, his Deputy Weiss and Colonel Heimannsberg, Commandant of the Berlin Schupo (Schutzpolizei) were arrested and taken to the Moabit prison, the famous Berlin jail, though their detention was only of short duration.

This *coup d'état* represented a simple means of gaining control of Prussian administration and, *inter alia*, of the Prussian State police, 90,000 men strong, which maintained order in the Reich capital. Hindenburg had a peculiar way of showing his gratitude for Braun's electoral support.

It is interesting to-day, after more than eleven years, to recall the comments of *The Times*<sup>1</sup> on the events described above :

"The Government of the Reich . . . no doubt considered that it would be very much better that they should undertake the restoration of order themselves . . . They have now proceeded to take the Administration of Prussia out of the hands of the Socialist Party, thus transferring the control of the Police into their own hands . . . It must be admitted that the Central Government were in an anomalous position being without control of the Police in their own capital, and undoubtedly Herr von Papen and General Schleicher have by their latest move immensely strengthened the hands of the authorities. . . ."

And on the next day *The Times* wrote :

" . . . In the personal changes it has so far made in the Prussian Administration the Papen-Schleicher Government has proceeded with a political moderation which suggests that it continues to hope for the eventual co-operation of the Centre Party and by no means regards its

<sup>1</sup> *Prussian Dictatorship*, *The Times*, July 22, 1932.

mission as merely that of introducing the Nazis gently into control. Not a single Nazi has yet been given an appointment. Of the twenty-four high provincial officials who have been retired, one belongs to the State (Democratic) Party and one to the Centre, and all the rest are Socialists. Other Socialist provincial Governors, however, remain in office, like Herr Noske, the one-time Reichswehr minister, and several democrats as well as Centre-men."

"It remains to be seen whether the Reich's Government and especially General von Schleicher will be able or even willing to withstand the Nazi pressure of a much more thorough-going change. Herr Strasser, Herr Hitler's principal lieutenant, made it clear in a speech last night that in his opinion the Papen-Schleicher Government is merely there to smooth the way for the Nazis. After July 31, he said, Germany should not be and would not be governed any more without the National Socialists. Herr Severing and 'Company' would be brought before a State-Court before many months were passed. The National Socialists would regard their task as fulfilled only when they had destroyed Marxism and its leaders in Germany. When Hitler was Chancellor, in a few weeks time, he would bring with him the confidence of 13,500,000 people."

On that occasion, the *Vorwaerts* (July 20) wrote :

"Though action has been taken against the Reich Government before the Reich Supreme Court, the highest instance competent to judge on these monstrous processes is the people. It must pass judgment on July 31 and make it as overwhelming as possible."

The German people did, in fact, "pass judgment" at the Reichstag elections of July 31—by giving Hitler's party 230 mandates.

### *Inertia of German Democracy*

All this was truly extraordinary, the more so as the democratic groups at that time had still very considerable forces at their disposal. At the end of 1932 the Socialists had about two hundred daily newspapers and a membership of one million, the Reichsbanner a membership of three and a half millions, and the free Socialist trade unions one of about five millions.<sup>1</sup> Where lies the mystery that they never attempted to make use of their power?

The numerous German apologists of the Social Democrats have tried to justify or excuse this passive attitude.

<sup>1</sup> According to the statistics for 1930 the A.D.G.B. (Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) had 4,876,000 members, the A.F.A. (Allgemeiner Freier Angestelltenbund) 446,000, and the A.D.B. (Allgemeiner Deutscher Beamtenbund) 180,000.

For example, Friedrich Stampfer in his book on the Weimar Republic states that :

"... in retrospect it may be said that on calm reflection no other conduct was possible, nor, in view of its whole mentality and history, was it to be expected of the Social Democratic Party. The men with whom the decision lay had proved on other occasions that they were no cowards ; Severing, for instance, who in the Reichstag marched through the benches of the raving National Socialists , and Wels<sup>1</sup> when, on March 23, 1933, he spoke in the Reichstag against Hitler's Enabling Law. But the bent for bloody adventures was very far from them. The Social Democrats had for decades been a party of peaceful development, of rational consideration, of understanding without violence—had it given the signal to hit out, it would have been attempting to appear as what it was not ..."

The truth is that the democratic elements had to reckon with the passive outlook of their electors ; they criticised the "bloody adventures" of reactionary and militarist circles in their country—but they did nothing else.

What was the attitude of the German Catholics at the time of von Papen's *coup d'état* against Prussia ? The answer is contained in a letter written to the Chancellor by Cardinal Bertram on July 19 from Breslau on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Fulda :

"... As is generally known, the request of the Prussian Bishops before the last Prussian Diet elections that the State Government should set a limit with a strong hand to the violent attitude of the radical parties, for the protection of public peace ... received benevolent and effective attention. The members of the Bishops' Conference of Fulda venture the urgent and respectful request that the Reich Government should now, in the last weeks before the Reichstag elections, again meet the terrorism of the radical parties, which is gaining the upper hand, with thorough-going severity. ..."

The members of the dismissed Prussian Government appealed to the State High Court (Staatsgerichtshof) at Leipzig for a ruling whether Hindenburg's decision was in accordance with the Weimar Constitution. The Court, on its part, got out of it by not giving a direct answer to the question that had been submitted to it, and ruling on October 25 that "the Decree of the Reich President of July 20, 1932, on the restoration of public security and order was consistent with the Constitution in so far

<sup>1</sup> It must be admitted that Stampfer is somewhat optimistic about Wels. See later, page 576.

as it appoints the Reich Commissioner for Prussia and authorises him provisionally to withdraw from Prussian Ministers their official powers and to take over these powers himself or entrust them to other persons as Reich Commissioners. This, however, may not extend to the withdrawal from the members of the Prussian Government of the representation of Prussia in the Reichsrat." On the other hand, the High Court expressed the view that public security and order were considerably "endangered and disturbed," so that the Reich President was entitled to take, under Article 48 of the Constitution, all measures which seemed to him suitable, so long as they were in accordance with the Constitution.

*Statements of von Papen and von Schleicher*

On July 20, Chancellor von Papen, in an interview granted to Mr B. Hugh Raillie, vice-president of the United Press, said :

"My Government is convinced that its primary task is to recapture the economic and political place in international life to which Germany is entitled. By fulfilling this function, we would not only enable Europe to cope effectively with its tremendous difficulties, but go far towards solving the world economic crisis. This means, of course, that the discriminations imposed on us on the basis of the Versailles Treaty must be rectified in the world's interest, so that for instance the Treaty's moral discriminations against Germany, as exemplified by the War-Guilt clause and the seizure of our colonies on the assumption that we were worse colonizers than anybody else, must be abolished. Germany's struggle against the Treaty's discriminations will be carried on relentlessly. We require an Army merely for our security and the safeguarding of our frontiers. We insist upon both moral equality and the right to possess modern military implements."

On the eve of the Reichstag election, von Papen made a broadcast speech to the United States in which he emphasized that the "real source of German despair and discontent is to be found in the Treaty of Versailles." Now, once more, he added, Germany was on the path of peaceful evolution. Von Papen denied that he or any member of his Government would lend support whatsoever to the establishment of a dictatorship. This statement was preceded also over the radio by a statement from von Schleicher, which threw a light on the tendencies of the



Reichswehr. He began by declaring his dislike of military dictatorships and of involving the Army in politics. The assertion that the Bruening Government had been upset by a camarilla of Generals and Junkers was a lie. He accused France of hypocrisy, because the French knew that Germany had no army, no arms, and that the Reichswehr could not oppose a single French division for a day.

"... For I should have considered it impossible that after all the sad and bitter experience of the post war period there should still be people in Germany who seriously regard our small Wehrmacht as adequate for the defence of our frontiers. This has demonstrated to me again how easily the German will surrender himself to illusions, particularly when it suits him from the party point of view. After all, it is the bare fact that no other European country possesses so little of that security for which, paradoxical as this may sound, the strongest military Power in the world is constantly calling. This attitude of our Western neighbour has been described in the Reichstag by Minister Stresemann, who can really not be reproached with prejudice against the country of his negotiating partner Briand, as 'hypocrisy,' and I think there are few people in Germany who would disagree with this.

"I should be a bad War Minister—added the General—if I were not pleased with every young German who by means of physical and particularly through voluntary discipline, is steeling his will, his courage and, in a word, his character. I am so often told that this hobby of getting drilled is in reality incomprehensible and almost unworthy. I can only answer that people who have no understanding for this do not know the elation of young lads who have got something extraordinary out of their bodies and have for the first time completely conquered the swine<sup>1</sup> within themselves. It is the feeling that is expressed in the words: 'And if you do not risk your lives, you will never have won life.'"

### *Hitler's Propaganda*

In the Nazi camp, during July 1932, Adolf Hitler was redoubling his efforts to win over the German people to his side in the last phase of his struggle. The political propaganda of the Nazi Party was intensified, presenting Germany's economic future in the rosy light of senseless promises. The starting point to him was the revival of the idea of the State, only then would it be possible to extricate national economy from the entanglements of world economy. It was the duty of agriculture to provide the food supply of the German people by German labour from German soil, while the task to be set for industry

<sup>1</sup> In the original text *Schwemehund*.

was to make provision that shelter and clothing was ensured for German compatriots. But industrial autarchy would be not possible even at the cost of unremitting effort and foreign policy would have to intervene : recovery of colonial possessions, not as a matter of imperialistic expansion, but in order "to obtain there on German soil, by German effort, German raw materials with which to cover the requirements of all German compatriots." In addition, Germany's frontiers must be advanced eastwards, so that the German demographic increase can be accommodated. Here again it was emphasised that the main motive was not the imperialistic spirit, but "the correct realization of a natural law, the realization that Creation has implanted the instinct of self-preservation into man's soul, so that he should not be destroyed."

Earlier, in June, Gregor Strasser, the "Chief organizer of the N.S.D.A.P.," had broadcast his first address on behalf of the Party, which had been admitted to German wireless transmission. He said :

"... The Nazis do not want reaction, but healing, not a systemless revolution, but an organic new order. They are revolutionaries because they want to overthrow the decaying, immoral ideas of the French Revolution. They want protection for honourable labour against abuse by capitalism ; they want to root out that speculation which bankrupted the people. They do not want to persecute Jews, but they want German leadership without the Jewish spirit, without Jews pulling the strings, and without Jewish capital.

"They do not want a war, and set their hopes on the new generation in other countries and people of like views abroad ; they can do without the concessions of their foreign enemies. They do not shrink from a war if it should prove to be the last means of defending Germany's political and social freedom. They revolt with all the strength of their spirits and hearts against the stigma of War guilt, which lies heavy on every German and robs him of his honour. They do not want a senseless rearmament at any price ; they demand that other countries should fulfil their sacred assurances and disarm. As long as other peoples arm they demand the same right for Germany. Their foreign policy, therefore, demands, first of all, the restoration of Germany's honour. The false path they have trodden must be retraced, from the Young Plan to the root of the evil, the Treaty of Versailles. The Versailles Treaty, being an immoral treaty judging by the moral standards of the whole civilized world, must be declared null and void. The watchword and program is Germany, only Germany, nothing but Germany." (*Berliner Tageblatt*.)

*Reichstag Election of July, 1932*

The General Election to the Reichstag took place on July 31, 1932. The result, in the order of the gains made, was as follows :

Nazis <sup>1</sup>	...	...	13,732,779	votes or 37.33 %	and 230 mandates.
Social Democrats	.		7,951,245	„ 21.5 %	„ 133 „
Communists	...	..	5,278,094	„ 14.27 %	„ 89 „
Catholic Centre	..		4,486,501	„ 12.44 %	„ 75 „
German Nationals	...		2,172,941	„ 5.88 %	„ 37 „

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Total ... .. 33,521,560 votes or 91.33 % and 564 mandates.

This was the result as regards the principal parties, the total number of voters being nearly 36.9 millions. In spite of their electoral victory the Nazis, even with the aid of the whole of the Right, could not have mustered a majority in the new Reichstag. In any case, there seemed to be no doubt that at this juncture the Centre held the balance and a great deal depended on the line it was going to adopt in the near future.

*Ban on the Word "Republic"*

On August 11, 1932, the date of the thirteenth and last "Constitution Day" (*Verfassungsfeier*) of the Weimar Republic, the Manifesto of Chancellor von Papen for the first time omitted to use the word "Republic." The whole of the Reich Government was present at the ceremony, but the foremost representative of the State of Prussia was no longer a Prime Minister in office, but the Reich Commissioner's deputy Dr Bracht. The Reich Minister of the Interior, Baron von Gayl, stated at this celebration that, after all, the Weimar Constitution was the only legal basis capable of uniting all Germans, but that it would now be a good thing to modify it.

"... Finally," he said, "we must also think of the internal reconstruction of the Reich. Our experience since August 11, 1919, has amply demonstrated how untenable is a situation in which different policies can be carried on in all spheres by governments of different composition and convictions in the Reich and Prussia respectively. Thus the relation between the Reich and Prussia must be changed in the direction of close community between them. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> On August 30 the Reichstag elected Hermann Goering as Speaker by 367 votes against 135 for the Socialist Loebe and 80 for the Communist Torgler.

*Political Intrigues*

Immediately after the elections, von Schleicher resumed his intrigues with Hitler, with which von Papen soon associated himself. During the first days of August there were interviews between them, the Chancellor making it widely known<sup>1</sup> that he could rely on the loyal collaboration of the Nazi Party. Hitler's lieutenants, Goering, Goebbels, Roehm, and others had been admitted to the Herrenklub, where they could often be seen associating with such Junkers as von Oldenburg-Januschau and von Alvensleben, if not with General von Schleicher himself, and perorating on the Germany of to-morrow, a Germany extending from Paris to Odessa and from the Baltic to the Adriatic.<sup>2</sup> In other words, they were hatching plans beside which the "Mittel-Europa" dreamed of by Friedrich Naumann paled into insignificance.

As to Hitler himself, he was summoned by President von Hindenburg to Berlin. This time he was not rebuffed, as he had been when he had claimed for himself in October, 1931, sole direction of the Reich and all executive power. Now, on the contrary, he said he was going to be in opposition. The conversation ended with an exhortation addressed by von Hindenburg to Hitler to conduct the opposition of the Nazi Party "in a chivalrous manner." However, the President could not have been in doubt as to Hitler's intentions. Goebbels, in an article in the *Angriff* entitled "Power for Hitler," said quite plainly:

"... There must be no doubt about this: We are not going to stay in the twilight. Either we are given power, then we shall bear the responsibility; or we are denied power, then we shall be in opposition and fight. The position will then be that the Government which at its inception somewhat prematurely adorned itself with the title of 'National Concentration,' will be up against the bitter resistance of the whole of national Germany, which is to-day under our leadership. We need not worry as to the outcome of that struggle. . . . The movement is setting out with calm, assured resolve. Its aim is the same as always - Power for Hitler"

It was only when von Papen had realized that Hitler was not willing to support him as Chancellor that he attacked the latter violently in a speech at Muenster

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Reuter on August 17, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Blood-Ryan, *Franz von Papen*, p. 148.

(August 28, 1932). All the more bizarre and deceptive was, from then on, the attitude of ex-Chancellor Dr Bruening who, three days after von Papen's speech, in an interview with Dr Paul Rohrbach, the notorious Pan-Germanist, at Munich, stated that out of patriotism, and out of his desire to strengthen the Constitution, he, Dr Bruening, was willing to "establish contact" with the National Socialists. Bruening stated, among other things, that he had for weeks been asked by people not belonging to his party not to refuse a discussion with the National Socialist leaders.

"But," he said, "he could not decide on such a discussion so long as there were negotiations pending between the National Socialists and the Government, in order not to disturb these negotiations. Now, at the request of patriotic men, he had declared his readiness to establish contact. The object of the discussion was to discover whether there was any possibility at all to form a national coalition."

Where were the leaders of democratic Germany at this time? Again and again, they were keeping quiet. They had capitulated in advance<sup>1</sup> and were trying to exculpate themselves by throwing the responsibility on others. For instance, Loebe, the Socialist ex-Reichstag Speaker<sup>2</sup> said:

"... When, after the sudden dismissal of Bruening, I pointed out in the highest quarter that there was no reason for this change of government, and raised the question on whose support the new Cabinet proposed to rely in Parliament, it was immediately stated that such support was expected from the National Socialists. To my objection that this party itself wanted to get into power and was not willing to tolerate or support other cabinets, I received the cryptic answer that it was different now and support had been promised. In view of these precise statements I was obliged, despite my inner doubts, to capitulate, and I understand to-day more than ever the disappointment and indignation of the Government and the Reich President over this, I will not say breach of promise, but over the deception to which they had fallen victim. Thus the fact that the brief interview between Hindenburg and Hitler took place not in the usual form, round a table, but 'standing up,' was due not so much to the composition of the party as to this indignation."

### *Von Papen's Internal Policy*

The first Emergency Decree for "securing the Budget," issued by von Papen's Government and signed by von Hindenburg, bore an anti-social character. It was dated

<sup>1</sup> See *Vorwaerts*, August 10, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> See *Vorwaerts*, August 19, 1932.

June 13 and decreed most drastic cuts in unemployment dole as well as in the pensions of men disabled in the 1914-1918 war or at their work. A new levy was imposed on salaries and a special tax on wages and salaries, named "Unemployment Aid," included those of less than £250 a year which until then had been free of tax. Unemployment insurance benefit was henceforward reduced by 23 per cent. On September 3 the Government issued another Decree designed to activate "the revival of economic life." By making a gift of more than two thousand million marks to German industry as a "premium for increased employment," the Reich Government was depriving its own budget of the like sum, a deficit being created on the somewhat artificial assumption that a revival of business would make it up by an increase of revenue.

Von Papen's anti-social measures had a bad reception and the Left demanded cancellation of the decree. But the Chancellor had a decree dissolving the Reichstag signed in advance by Hindenburg, in case the Reichstag refused him its confidence. On September 12 the Reichstag in fact passed a vote of No-confidence in the Chancellor by 513 votes against 32, with five abstentions. The Chancellor asked Speaker Goering to be allowed to address the House and promulgate the decree of dissolution. Goering, in an attempt to frustrate the manoeuvre, prevented him from speaking, so the Chancellor promulgated the decree outside the Reichstag; it read as follows:

"Decree of the Reich President concerning the dissolution of the Reichstag, dated September 12, 1932. In virtue of Article 25 of the Reich Constitution I dissolve the Reichstag because there is a danger that the Reichstag will resolve the cancellation of my Emergency Decree of September 3."

A great legal discussion now began, the question being whether the Reichstag vote was null and void because the Reichstag was dissolved immediately after, or whether, on the contrary, the decree of dissolution was illegal because it was promulgated after the vote of No-confidence. . . . In the end the Reichstag remained dissolved, President von Hindenburg having decided the question in favour of his Chancellor.

*" Jugendertuechtigung "*

Two days later, on September 14, President Hindenburg issued a Decree in the matter of Youth Efficiency (*Jugendertuechtigung*) which dealt with Youth training in a military spirit :

" The steeling of the body, the education of youth to love of order and comradeship and devotion to the community, are tasks incumbent upon the State . The solution of these tasks will be effected in collaboration with all the associations of the most varied kinds which have devoted themselves to this work for German youth in the past, and whom I thank for this work. In order to unite for common and uniform work for the future all the forces that have the training of German youth at heart, I hereby establish a Reich Curatorium for Youth Training." <sup>1</sup>

General Edwin von Stuelpnagel was appointed acting Chairman of the new organization. We shall meet this General later on, in the Second World War in Paris, ordering the massacre of French hostages in the occupied territory . . .

*Disarmament Conference at Geneva ( July 1932 )*

At Geneva the Disarmament Conference was still proceeding. On June 22 Mr Hugh Gibson, on behalf of the American Delegation, presented a detailed scheme for the reduction of aggressive armaments on land, at sea and in the air, while maintaining adequate defensive armaments. The tonnage of battleships and submarines was to be reduced by one-third, that of other ships by one-quarter. This proposal met with approval on the part of Germany, Soviet-Russia and Italy—but was not adopted. Instead, the Conference on July 22 passed a Resolution which,

<sup>1</sup> The following is extracted from the *Directives of the Reich Minister of the Interior*, issued with the Decree . " The Versailles Treaty forbids German youth to occupy itself with military matters, particularly to train with war weapons. This sets limits to open air sports whose observance must be made the duty of all. But there is no ban on educating German youth to the basic qualities that fit a man for military service which no people that want to live can renounce. . . .

" . . . Open air sport served to train German youth to fitness for military service. Fitness for military service means physical and mental virility as such, and devotion to the community. . . . Physical training must achieve hardness, endurance and toughness and enable the men to perform feats of perseverance of long duration.

" The following may become instructors . Sports trainers, former Reichswehr officers, and former police officers."

while referring to the principles laid down in the American proposals, declared in vague terms :

1. That a substantial reduction of world armaments should be effected and applied as a whole by a general convention to land, naval, and aerial armaments.
2. That an essential aim to be achieved is reduction of the aggressive weapons.

This Resolution was supported by forty-one countries, while two opposed it and eight abstained from voting. The opponents were Germany and Soviet-Russia, while Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria were among the abstainers.<sup>1</sup>

*The Times* of July 23 wrote in this connection that :

"The resolution was disappointing in substance though sound in its general tendencies . . . It is certainly not possible that in any universally acceptable scheme certain countries shall continue to be counted in a special and separate category as Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria now are. It is one of the weak points to mitigate this anomalous inequality of status, which is one of the sources of political unrest in Europe. The German delegate drew attention to it yesterday in unequivocal language. . . ."

The French press in general was different. In its view the moment had not in fact come to take for granted the German interpretation<sup>2</sup> of equal rights and to abandon the limitation of German armaments provided by the Treaty of Versailles. The chief difficulty thus lay in the divergent attitude of Germany and France towards the principle of equality. No revision of Germany's limitation of armaments seemed to be likely to be agreed to by France unless there was to be some further advance in the international organization of security.

<sup>1</sup> The other States which abstained were Afghanistan, Albania and Turkey. China, although expressing approval of the resolution, abstained, as she could not undertake to disarm until the Chinese-Japanese dispute was settled.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview he granted on September 1 to the "*Resto del Carlino*" concerning German disarmament, or rather rearmament demands, General von Schleicher said, in reply to the question what the Minister meant by equal rights in the armaments: "Germany on principle claims in connection with military constitution, organization and division of her military forces, equipment with arms, fortification on land and armament production, the same rights as the other Powers. If the other Powers do not wish to imitate the German defence system, which would be in accordance with their disarmament promises, then they must allow Germany to reconstruct her defence forces by methods which they themselves regard as indispensable for their national security. The German Army has no Air Force, no tanks, heavy artillery, anti-aircraft guns, the German Navy no U-boats, aircraft carriers, heavy cruisers, etc. . . ."



The German Delegation, which was headed by Ambassador Nadolny, after having violently opposed the Resolution, packed its bags—a theatrical move—and abruptly left Geneva. Blackmail was likely to engender success . . .

On August 29, 1932, Baron von Neurath, Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, sent a Note to the French Government summing up the German point of view :

"1. The decisions taken by the Disarmament Conference are without any significance for Germany, because the Resolution of July 22 completely ignores the question whether the decisions taken also apply to the Reich.

"2. The Disarmament convention worked out by the Conference must replace, as regards Germany, Part V of the Treaty, which will then lapse.

"3. Germany demands equality of military rights, that is to say, the right to decide for herself the constitution of the army she requires to ensure her security. To act otherwise would be to keep her in the position of a second rate nation.

"4. Germany is ready to renounce all armaments which will be renounced by the other Powers as well "

In order to allay the apprehensions of Britain, the Wilhelmstrasse was said to have given her to understand confidentially that the principle of equal rights would be applied to a limited degree, if at all, to naval armaments.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time von Schleicher made a violent speech at Königsberg—on September 6—stating that East Prussia was menaced by Poland. On that occasion President Hindenburg had sent a telegram expressing sympathy with his East Elbian compatriots. Seen in perspective, there is a striking resemblance between von Schleicher's speech and an address delivered six years later, also at Königsberg, by the Nazi Oberpraesident Dr Koch. There again, East Prussia was "menaced" by its Slav neighbour. But this time it happened on the eve of the invasion of Poland by Hitler's armies.

The French Government replied to the German note on September 11, stating, among other things, that the French doctrine was centred in and based on Article 8 of the Covenant, which "specifies that the maintenance of peace demands the reduction of armaments and that it is necessary to tend towards general disarmament, not partial rearmament."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *New York Times*, August 4, 1932.

A few days later, on September 18, it was Britain's turn to define her point of view :

"With the profound sense of their duty to promote appeasement," said the British statement, "... H.M. Government feel constrained to state at the outset that they think it unfortunate that a political controversy of this magnitude should arise at this moment, when it is necessary that attention and energy should not be diverted from efforts which are being undertaken and are so urgently needed to restore the productive and commercial prosperity of the world. Granted that this question of equality of status would have arisen before the Disarmament Conference concluded its work, there is grave disadvantage in forcing it to the front at this stage. Germany has suffered and is suffering from the prevailing economic depression and widespread unemployment, and the other signatories of the Treaty of Versailles have recognised this and have shown themselves ready in consequence to abate and indeed fundamentally to revise their financial claims upon Germany. In view of Germany's economic difficulties the initiation of acute controversy in the political field must be accounted unwise. And in view of the concessions so recently granted to Germany by her creditors, it must be accounted particularly untimely. H.M. Government most earnestly hope that nothing may be now allowed to intervene which would retard the process of economic recovery and which it will be the task of the approaching World Economic Conference to promote by every means in its power. . ."

In conclusion, the British Note expressed objection to the Reich's policy of menaces at Geneva.

The British Note was not of a kind to please even moderate political opinion in Berlin. The Catholic Centre's organ *Germania* wrote that it had been called to order by the Press of the Right when, in the days of the Lausanne Conference, it had pointed out the growing signs of Anglo-French intimacy; if the British Government believed that it could, by its method, force Germany to go back to the conference table in Geneva, it was in error as to the seriousness of the German will to equal rights. The compromise proposal expected from the British side, continued *Germania*, had in fact turned out to be complete support of the French point of view.

The Social Democratic *Abend* stated :

"... In any case, the British Note, for political reasons, deliberately overlooks the fact that French militarism is to blame for the claims of its re-awakened German brother."

The German Government itself had an article published in the *Correspondance de Genève* of September 24 by von

Neurath, the Reich Foreign Minister ; he repeated more or less exactly Bruening's thesis :

" . . . It is not Germany that wants to rearm, but other countries that refuse to disarm, to accept the same obligations under which Germany stands. Let us hope that the German attitude will be correctly understood everywhere and equality of rights for Germany will soon be recognised everywhere as something self-understood."

The following day, M. Edouard Herriot, French Prime Minister, revealed in a speech delivered at Gramat, that what the German Reich wanted was rearmament for itself and not a reduction of armaments. Immediately, von Papen made an accusation against France. In an interview he granted on the 29th to the Wolff Agency, he said :

" Unfortunately, I must deny this I see in this only a fresh difficulty in the way of any understanding, a confirmation of the negative attitude of the French Note of September 11 . . . I say it is not a matter of German rearmament, but one of the implementation of the disarmament promises of the other Powers There is no question of German rearmament, but of German equality of rights and the equal treatment of Germany at the Disarmament Conference . . ."

Scheidemann, on being asked, in an interview to the *Etoile Belge* (September 27) whether the German Social Democrats agreed with the disarmament provisions of the Versailles Treaty, said :

" Our aim was always general disarmament, but we too, naturally claim equality of rights for Germany, and I think I can assure you that in this question the German people are unanimous."

Scheidemann went on to say that disagreement undoubtedly existed between the Papen Government and the German Social Democrats as regards procedure.

" One must not be too hasty Nevertheless, it must be recalled that German disarmament was expressly to constitute the beginning of general disarmament, but a beginning that drags on for fourteen years is unprecedented."

For Scheidemann there was no security outside general disarmament, but if the others still thought they could find security in armaments only, it was to be feared that one day the Germans too would adopt that view. In reply to the reporter's objection that the German people were in themselves militarists, Herr Scheidemann stressed that this was mostly a consequence of the discrimination arising from the Versailles Treaty. Ultimately, Germany

was striving for nothing else but the "freedom of movement" in which the other European countries were indulging.

In this same interview the Socialist leader also answered another question put to him by the reporter, *i.e.*, whether it would have been better for Germany if she had altogether refused to sign the Versailles Treaty. Scheidemann said that it was known to-day what would have happened if the Treaty had been rejected. The German Government had at that time received a secret document, from which it was gathered that if the Treaty were refused, the French Army would have occupied Kassel (Headquarters of the Supreme Command) and advanced to the Weser line, Bavaria and the Rhineland were to be detached from the Reich and relieved of all Reparations. At that time it was a matter of saving the Reich and that, ultimately, was the reason why the Reich Government had to yield.

### *Attitude of the Political Parties*

On the eve of the Reichstag elections of November 6, 1932, certain changes occurred in the attitude of the political parties. The German Nationals, scared by the successes of their allies of the Harzburg-Front, changed their minds and launched a frontal attack against the National Socialists. They even asserted that the Nazis had no political program, but were copying the ideas of the German Nationals, which was partly true.<sup>1</sup> Hugenberg, outlining his party's program, demanded that the Government should not lose a moment in eliminating parliamentary influence in the settlement of the most urgent questions which "must be solved while Hindenburg is still Reich President. In this electoral campaign the German National People's Party is the only party in a position to deal with National Socialism in a form necessary for the future of the nation."<sup>2</sup>

As to the Catholic Centre, strangely enough, Mgr. Kaas in an electoral speech delivered on October 17 at Munster

<sup>1</sup> "Not even the expression 'Third Reich' had originated in their own minds. He (Hugenberg) himself was the first to use this expression in 1919, not long after the Revolution." Cf. R. von Sebottendorff, *Wie es zu Hitler kam. Urkundliches aus der Fruehzeit der National-Sozialistischen Bewegung*

<sup>2</sup> Hugenberg's speech at Cassel, October 27, 1932.

demanded a "German emergency and majority link-up" with the Nazis, while Herr Joos, Vice-Chairman of the party, declared :<sup>1</sup>

"We cannot give a chance to a Government whose policy and methods we consider to be wrong. Because the Centre could not tolerate the Papen Government, it entered into negotiations with the National Socialists with a view to winning them over for a practical, responsible policy. In these negotiations the representatives of the Centre, of whom I was one, yielded nothing of the principles of the party. There was no question of handing power to the National Socialists. After November 6 the policy of the present Reich Government will be liquidated."

And a few days later, on October 28, 1932, at the Catholic Centre Congress in Frankfort, Deputy Stegerwald, former Minister of Labour and a friend of Bruening, explained the reasons why the Centre was opposing von Papen. He said that the Reich Government had suffered one diplomatic defeat after another. At home Germany needed peace, and that was impossible except through union with Hitler. He added that the Catholic Centre would even be prepared to "tolerate" von Papen, provided the National Socialist Party were called to share power. According to Stegerwald, collaboration between the Reich President, the Reichswehr, the Centre and the moderate wing of the Nazis was "stronger than the unrestrained elements among the National Socialists." The moderate wing referred to meant Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and their followers !

The strange thing about the Catholic Centre's weakness for the Nazis and their Fuehrer was that it existed despite the fact that the latter and his lieutenants were treating the Catholics with utter contempt. Stranger still, no one could have any doubts in the matter. In the eyes of the Nazis the Catholics did not count, and they did not shrink from shouting this from the housetops. Moreover, the Nazis had never ceased demanding complete power for Hitler as the sole means of overcoming all of Germany's difficulties.

Hitler himself had clearly defined his attitude towards the Catholic Centre :<sup>2</sup>

"The Nazi movement," he said, "has not fought for thirteen years in

<sup>1</sup> Joos's speech at Freiburg i/B., October 23, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> On May 20, on the eve of Bruening's downfall, in a speech to the National Socialist Members of the Prussian Diet.

order now, when it holds the future of the nation in its hands, to pursue the policy of present day Germany in any coalition. National Socialists do not recognise any other judges of their fitness to govern than themselves."

The Nazi Party's monthly in Munich had, in November 1931, already published the following piece of fine prose :

" . . These hypocrites of the mendacious Centre Party, these notorious criminals and frauds, walk about in processions in their greasy clerical gowns with consecrated candles, claiming a monopoly of Christianity and libelling the National Socialists as enemies of the Church. What this mob is doing has nothing whatever to do with Christianity. . . . It will be the task of the National Socialists to clean up this morass of scoundrelly and corrupt monks of the Centre Party. Away with the sanctimonious hypocrites, liars and cheats of the Centre bloc."

On October 17, 1932, the very day when Mgr. Kaas demanded collaboration with the Nazis, Hitler, speaking at Koenigsberg, cried :

" Once we get power, we shall keep it, so help us God. We shall not let it be taken from us "

And on October 24, at the Berlin Sportpalast, Goebbels said :

" We did not negotiate with the Centre in order to save Parliament ; we negotiated with the Centre in order to sweep this stratum, which is foreign to the nation, out of the way, for we regard it as the greatest misfortune for Germany's immediate future. . . ."

What of the trade unions ? Their attitude was reflected in a statement made by Th. Leipart, President of the Association of German Trade Unions (A.D.G.B.) in a speech at Bernau,<sup>1</sup> in which he insisted on the need for collaboration. " No social stratum can stand aside from the national development," he said. And after outlining the constructive achievements of the trade unions since 1918, he went on :

" We have supported everything calculated to make our people free and economically sound. But we object to the national idea being made synonymous with the aristocratic-capitalist system. Our work is service to the people. It knows the military spirit of co-ordination and devotion to the community. We are anti-militarists and avow it unequivocally. But we object to being regarded as pacifists without a sense of our honour and of the interests of the German people. We are fighters, not weakly politicians of understanding."

Leipart's speech earned him public praise from Nazi chieftain Gregor Strasser, who drew the conclusion that it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Frankfurter Zeitung*, October 28, 1932.

would be well if Leipart now openly dissociated himself from the International. This wish was fulfilled a year later by Wels.

As to the Stahlhelm, which was working hand in glove with the Reichswehr, it issued, through its leader, Seldte, the following election program for the Reichstag elections fixed for November 6, 1932 :

"The Stahlhelm will continue to avoid binding itself to individual parties. Its struggle is governed by its great immutable aims : a strong Government, independent of parties, unconditional military sovereignty, reconstruction of the Reich, co-ordination of all Germans into the production and enjoyment of the national wealth, protection of the property of every German. Every Stahlhelm comrade must decide accordingly for which party he will vote."

It was easy for Adolf Hitler to summarise, so to speak, all these nationalist programs by promising the German people that he would succeed with it better than anyone else—and do so alone. In an interview<sup>1</sup> he gave to the Rome paper *Tevere*, he said :

"Just as in 1918 the Communists struck with a dagger at German foreign policy, so to-day von Papen's reaction has fallen into the country's back by trying to hold up my advance. It has succeeded in getting the aged Reich President to refuse me the Reich Chancellorship, although I had 14 million voters and 230 Deputies in the Reichstag. According to the Reich Constitution I am entitled to be given the government under the law. Herr von Papen represents a small group and is neither morally nor politically entitled to speak in the name of the people. We are neither in a hurry, nor afraid, nor are we nervous, because we know that the elections of November 6 will turn out in our favour."

"The day is near" concluded Hitler, "when the National Socialists will govern, not through a *coup d'état*, but by the unanimous will of the German people, for its benefit, and in the name of God. Germany and Italy have the same enemies, and it is their task to work jointly for the cause of civilization"

At the same time, the Nazi Party diligently stressed the socialistic aims which it wanted to achieve. It accused the Papen régime of serving capitalist interests, and at the end of October 1932, the Nazis organized a traffic strike in Berlin as a protest against a wage reduction for transport workers that had just taken place. The Nazi strike call concluded with the words : "Raise the banner of German Socialism, for a free State of German workers . . ."

<sup>1</sup> October 4, 1932.

The attack against von Papen's foreign policy had now become general. The Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee, whose Chairman was Nazi Dr Frick, on October 11th, 1932, passed a resolution with which the Socialists associated themselves, stating "that the Reich Government has not the courage to uphold their foreign policy, which has been accompanied by serious failures in Lausanne and Geneva," while Hugenberg said :

"... to-day Germany must carry a second Young Plan, the one relating to the settlement of private foreign debts, which our economy, squeezed dry by the Dawes and Young Plans, is not in a position to carry."

It was in this confused political atmosphere that the Papen Government, for the second time in 1932, organized a general election.

*Reichstag General Election of November 1932*

Whereas at the election of July 31, 1932, the Nazis had obtained 230 mandates, this time the number fell to 196. Nevertheless, they were ahead of the other Parties, the most important of which fared as follows in the electoral struggle :

			July 31, 1932.	November 6, 1932.
Social Democrats	...	...	133	121
Communists	...	...	89	101
Catholic Centre	...	...	75	70
German Nationals	...	...	37	51
German People's Party	...	...	7	11
Bavarian People's Party	...	...	22	19

It is true that there had been a slight drop in the total poll, yet the fact remains that the National Socialists had lost 2,000,000 votes. Hitler's "intuition" had been wrong. As to the bourgeois parties, they had, on the whole, maintained their positions.

After this election the Centre Party stated that it considered the voting of November 6 as "a crushing defeat" for the Papen system and: "In view of this judgment of the people, we shall take every justifiable step to bridge the dissension between the political camps and to render possible a strong Reich Government linked with



the people, instead of the present impossible state of affairs. . . ."

### *Fall of von Papen*

After the election von Papen immediately proceeded to consult the leaders of the various parties. But he met with nothing but difficulties. Hitler did not keep the appointment. The Centre was against von Papen, while the Socialists actually passed a resolution calling for his resignation. The hostile attitude of the political parties was probably partly due to General von Schleicher's intrigues. Schleicher evidently judged that his hour had come, for he also worked on the camarilla surrounding the President whom he wished to convince of the necessity of parting with his favourite Chancellor. General von Schleicher had dealt with Bruening. He now decided to oust von Papen and quietly laid the necessary mines, set to explode at the right time.

A Bavarian journal made the following observations in this connection :<sup>1</sup>

" . . . It seems to us that it is high time the Schleicher problem were cleared up. The state of affairs where a separate political government is established in the Reichswehr Ministry is in the long run intolerable, dangerous for politics and dangerous also for the Reichswehr. If Herr von Schleicher feels that he has the talent to become a leading statesman, it would be better to place him into the full limelight of responsibility and let him show what he really can do. But the Reichswehr Ministry needs a man who will confine himself to the tasks of his own Department."

Thus there was nothing left for von Papen to do but to resign. Accordingly, on November 17, 1932, he tendered the resignation of his Cabinet. It was accepted by Hindenburg, though he was distressed to part with von Papen, for whom he had a genuine friendship.

On December 5 Hindenburg sent the following letter to the ex-Chancellor :

" It is with a heavy heart and only on the basis of your personal representations and from an appreciation of the reasons presented, that I allow you to vacate this office. My confidence in and respect for your person and your work remain undiminished. During your activities as Reich Chancellor and Reich Commissioner for Prussia, which unfortunately lasted only six months, I have learned to hold in high esteem

<sup>1</sup> *Regensburger Anzeiger*, November 18, 1932.

your devoted work and love of responsibility, your selfless patriotism, and your noble character. I shall never forget the period of my collaboration with you. I express profound thanks, both on behalf of the Reich and on my own behalf, for everything you have done for the Fatherland during these difficult months. . . ."

On November 21, 1932, Hindenburg received Hitler in Berlin and asked him on what terms he, as the leader of the largest Party, would be prepared to accept the Chancellorship. The President summed up his own terms as follows :

1. As regards policy : The fixing of an economic program, no reversion to Reich-Prussian dualism, and no limitation in the application of Article 48.

2 From the personal angle, he reserved the right of final approval of the list of Ministers. The appointment of the Foreign Minister and the Reichswehr Minister he considered as acts safeguarding his constitutional rights as representative of the Reich under international law and Commander-in-Chief of the Reich Army, and therefore a matter for his own personal decision.<sup>1</sup>

There ensued a correspondence on this subject between Hindenburg (or State Secretary Meissner) and Adolf Hitler. Hitler, in a letter dated November 21, stated that :

"The difference between my view and that of the Papen Cabinet concerning the possibility of authoritarian government lies only in this, that I assume that this is in fact rooted in the people. It is my greatest desire and paramount aim to bring this about by lawful means in the interest of the German nation."

Meissner in his reply insisted that it was necessary for a Presidential Cabinet to adhere to a Presidential program that was "above Party."

After protracted negotiations, in which in addition to ex-Reichsbank Governor Schacht, who spent a considerable time with Hitler, the Duke of Coburg also intervened, Reichstag Speaker Goering, on November 23, delivered at the Reich Chancellery Hitler's reply to the Reich President's offer. In this connection the National Socialist Press Service issued an announcement in which Hitler summed up his terms as follows :

1. The Reich President has requested me to submit within forty-eight hours of the instruction a short program concerning the proposed measures of internal, external and economic policy.

<sup>1</sup> Wolff Agency report, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, November 25, 1932.

2. Within twenty-four hours after the approval of this program, I will submit to the Reich President a list of Ministers

3. In addition to other Ministers to be taken over from the present Government, I will propose to the Reich President General von Schleicher, his personal confidant, who is known to me, for the Reichswehr Ministry, and Freiherr von Neurath for the Reich Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4. The Reich President will then appoint me Reich Chancellor, and will confirm the Ministers proposed by me and approved by him

5. The Reich President will instruct me to create the constitutional conditions for the work of this Cabinet, and will for this purpose grant me the powers which in such critical and difficult times have never been denied even to parliamentary Reich Chancellors.

6 I promise that I will stake my person and movement and sacrifice myself to save the Fatherland.

However, Hindenburg refused to grant Hitler such extensive powers. The negotiations came to an end for the time being.

From this moment the personality of General von Schleicher came to the forefront. Up till now he had been loath to step into the limelight. There were weighty reasons for his reluctance to become Chancellor, essentially based on the fact that a man occupying such an important position in the Reichswehr must not stake his authority by public participation in politics without profound consideration.

As Schleicher was disliked by the Junkers, who were afraid of his contacts with the Socialist and Christian trade unions, Hindenburg was affected with a last-minute hesitancy; on November 29 he sent for von Schleicher and asked him whether he would be satisfied with a new von Papen Cabinet in which he, von Schleicher, would only be Vice-Chancellor and Reichswehr Minister. Schleicher bluntly refused. Finally, in order to escape from the *impasse*, the Field Marshal decided to resolve the conflict between the three competitors by appointing a General as Chancellor. "It is high time," said Hindenburg, "that the people were talked to in plain German; for that reason we must have a General as Chancellor of the Reich."<sup>1</sup> On December 2 Schleicher was asked to form a new Government.

<sup>1</sup> See *Berlin Diaries*, by Hellmut Klotz, New York, 1934, p. 217, seq.

*General von Schleicher becomes Chancellor*

The new Chancellor, having gained power by means of a series of the most perilous *volte-faces*, decided to court the support of the Socialist and Christian trade unions. He thought that by such an expedient he would be able to impose himself upon the Nazi movement, the extent of whose control of the German masses he very probably still underrated.

As early as November 28, 1932, he had begun to negotiate with Leipart, who formulated for him in writing the workers' aims and wishes as regards social legislation. On the same day an article appeared in *Der Deutsche*,<sup>1</sup> the organ of the Christian trade unions, praising General von Schleicher, who could be expected—according to the paper—to carry out social reforms and in any case to oppose a policy of low wages.

However, at the same time, Schleicher was also putting out feelers in the direction of the National Socialist Party. He knew that there was disharmony among the Nazis, who were in great financial difficulties, a fact exploited by Gregor Strasser, the "Organisations-Leiter" of the Party. Strasser upheld the thesis that National Socialism had no choice but to compromise or perish. Goebbels in his diary<sup>2</sup> recalls in passing that while Dr Schacht remained faithful to the Fuehrer throughout these difficult times, Gregor Strasser endeavoured to persuade Hitler on December 5, 1932, to make peace with von Schleicher, and on December 8 he wrote him a letter notifying his resignation of all the offices he held in the Party. He said that the Party must be "drawn closer to the State." The National Socialist movement would otherwise wear itself out in useless opposition. The General hastened to make it known that he was contemplating the nomination of Strasser as Vice-Chancellor of the Reich and at the same time Prime Minister of Prussia, a fact that worried the Fuehrer, who<sup>3</sup> saw in Strasser an uncomfortable rival.

Already on December 7, 1932, the *Taegliche Rundschau* disclosed Strasser's decision to resign the posts he held in

<sup>1</sup> Issue of November 28, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *My part in Germany's Fight*, 1938, ed. Hurst and Blackett, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Otto Braun, *Von Weimar zu Hitler*.

the Party, though Hitler wished it to be kept secret. The article was, of course, inspired by Strasser himself. It represented him as the Big Man of the Nazi Party, who alone was in a position to save the movement from the hopeless muddle into which it had fallen. What the article was actually trying to convey was that Strasser should be made Fuehrer of the movement in place of Hitler.

The latter, while not unduly worried about the dynamism and unity of his movement, was nevertheless at a loss how to present the conflict to the public. On December 9 the *Reichspressstelle* of the Nazi Party issued the following announcement :

" Party member Gregor Strasser has taken three weeks' sick-leave with the Fuehrer's approval. All rumours and speculations surrounding this subject are untrue and devoid of foundation."

This, of course, was a lie.

#### *Von Schleicher's Policy*

On December 16, 1932, the Chancellor delivered a broadcast speech in which he declared : " I bring not a sword, but peace." He denied that Germany was re-arming, but insisted that the German people had no intention of standing unarmed while " their throats are cut." Germany had the same right to security as any other nation. This was a matter of sovereignty.

As regards domestic affairs, von Schleicher declared that *de jure* the cessation of dualism between Prussia and the Reich was not possible just then, and that the Reich Commissioner appointed at a time of danger would continue to function for a long time to come. He further said that essential parts of von Papen's economic program would be maintained. The new Government proposed to devote 800,000 acres in North Germany and East Prussia to agricultural settlement at the expense of the large estates.

This was in direct opposition to Hindenburg's constant policy. The reaction was not slow in manifesting itself. On January 27, 1933, Goebbels noted in his diary that there had been a conference between the Nazis and " the gentlemen of the Reichslandbund " (Landowners' Federation), all of whom were against von Schleicher. " The road is clear at last," wrote Goebbels.

*Germany's Economic Rearmament*

During the Stresemann era, Germany had transferred part of her armaments production to factories she had created in Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Turkey, etc. But towards the end of the Bruening régime, and during the von Papen and von Schleicher régimes, there was a contrary movement—dispersal was replaced by centralisation in Germany, and the raw materials required to make war began to flow into Germany itself. After Hitler's accession to power this movement was of course accelerated.

Thus, despite the economic crisis, imports of iron ore for the production of armaments steel exceeded exports—in 1932 by 3,431,400 tons, in 1933 by 4,527,500 tons, and in 1934 by 8,183,300 tons—while steel production was rising to the figures of the years of prosperity, but with this difference, that whereas in 1929 Germany exported her steel all over the world, she was now consuming it herself.

As to other surpluses of imports over exports :

		1932.	1933.	1934.
Bauxite	... ..	20,000	293,100	326,000
Chromium	... ..	42,000	47,500	76,400
Metallic nickel	... ..	-600	2,000	4,100
Tungsten	... ..	1,600	3,650	4,300

In the same way, a steady and rapid progression may be observed as regards petrol (motorisation of the Army), cellulose, pyrites, sulphuric acid (explosives), cotton and hides (clothing), etc.<sup>1</sup>

All this was taking place under the very eyes of the former Allies of Versailles.

*Equality of Rights*

At Geneva the discussions on disarmament continued. This time Sir John Simon, the British Delegate, formulated his Government's views in a series of points. His proposals of November 18 involved limitation of various classes of ships, including total abolition of submarines, abolition, in particular, of tanks, important cuts in the Air Forces of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the interesting articles in *Europe Nouvelle*, Paris, special No., May 18, 1933, and Benoit Mechin, *Histoire de l'armée allemande*, Vol. 2, p. 531 seq.

the leading Powers, and so forth. At the same time, Britain considered that Germany's claim to equality of rights should be fully met and that the limitations imposed upon her under the provisions of the Versailles Treaty should be replaced by a general limitation of the armaments of all countries under a General Disarmament Convention. The plan recommended that the European States should solemnly affirm that they "will not in any circumstances attempt to resolve any present or future differences between them by resort to force."

The statement caused great satisfaction in Berlin. In official circles the great importance of Sir John Simon's "courageous statement" relating to Germany's right to equality was stressed.

Soon after (December 11), a Five-Power meeting took place in Geneva under Sir John's chairmanship. The representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and the U.S.A. agreed to meet the German demand for equality. The Five-Power Agreement stated, among other things, that "The Governments of the United Kingdom, France, U.S.A. and Italy have declared that one of the principles that should guide the Conference on disarmament should be to grant to Germany and to other Powers disarmed by the Treaty, equality of rights in a system which provided security for all nations and that this principle should be embodied in a Convention containing the conclusions of the Disarmament Conference." Further, the Agreement said that on the basis of the Declaration Germany had signified her willingness to resume her place at the Disarmament Conference.

"There will no longer be two standards in the matter of military status, but one—equal rights for all," said von Neurath, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a speech on December 21. But he added a reservation: "Nevertheless we must be careful not to believe that victory has been won, for the practical application of the equality of rights still remains to be discussed."

Thus Germany had won the first round. The second round took place in 1935, when Hitler, in open violation of Part V of the Peace Treaty, decided to abolish unilaterally the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty and to re-introduce compulsory military service in Germany.

*The Conflict with Bavaria*

At the beginning of July 1932, the Bavarian Government objected to the Emergency Decree of June 28, 1932, which allowed the Nazi organizations, the Stahlhelm and the Reichsbanner organizations to wear uniforms. The Munich Government was doubtful whether the Decree would contribute to the maintenance of public order and security, and it held the Reich Government responsible for the consequences of this measure. It remained hostile to von Papen, and the Prime Minister, Dr Held, refused to comply with the Chancellor's various measures. The Reich Government retaliated later, in November 1932, by instructing the Federal envoy, Baron von Lersner, to boycott the Munich Government. On February 22, 1933, Dr Held, remembering the Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch of 1923, admitted that Bavaria was perhaps on the eve of an attempt to deprive her of her autonomy by violence, but added that she was ready to face this eventuality. However, later, when Hitler in fact suppressed the autonomy of the German States, Held failed to put up any effective opposition.

*Schleicher's Weakness*

Already on December 19, Goebbels wrote in his diary that a large edition of a book entitled *The Rise of General von Schleicher* was about to be published. "A great pity," he added, "since when the book appears in the shop windows, von Schleicher will have disappeared from the political stage . . ." Goebbels was not mistaken, for von Schleicher was able to hold the Chancellorship for only a few weeks longer.

Meanwhile, ex-Chancellor von Papen, thirsting for personal revenge, was bent on liquidating von Schleicher, and he therefore sought a *rapprochement* with Hitler. On January 4, 1933, there was a meeting between Hitler and von Papen in Cologne at the house of Schroeder, the banker. The interview was to be kept secret, but through an indiscretion it was reported in the Press. The event was of historic importance.

The details and circumstances of this Cologne meeting remained a mystery. Hitler and von Papen published only



a vague statement that their discussion exclusively dealt with the question "of the forming of a great united national front, and that the views about the Cabinet now in office were not discussed." Immediately after, Hitler met Hugenberg and also Fritz Thyssen in Berlin. It is interesting to note that these meetings were immediately followed by a considerable improvement in the finances of the Nazi Party. The money for the vast propaganda campaign for the Nazi-planned "Day of the National Awakening" was quickly raised.

### *Schleicher's Fall*

Von Schleicher had been Chancellor for less than two months when, towards the end of January, he and his Cabinet were obliged to resign. Surrounded by the hostility of the Junkers and Big Business, von Schleicher suggested to von Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag, as he had done in the case of Bruening and von Papen, thus investing the Cabinet with full "presidential" authority. But von Hindenburg felt less generous towards Schleicher than he had been towards the others. He refused. On January 28 von Schleicher was compelled to resign.

## CHAPTER XIV

### TRIUMPH OF TOTALITARIAN NATIONALISM

#### *Hitler becomes Reich's Chancellor*

AFTER von Schleicher's forced resignation the way to power was open to Hitler. This time he was supported by the Junkers and Big Business. Hindenburg had no choice but to appoint him, on January 30, 1933, Chancellor of the Reich.

When the Berlin crowds learnt the news they became delirious. Brownshirts and members of the Stahlhelm fraternised with the police. Two songs, the "Horst Wessel Lied" and "Deutschland ueber Alles" rose above the turmoil. That night the streets in all German towns were filled with crowds jubilantly acclaiming the birth of the Third Reich.

The Marshal's friend, von Papen, was made Vice-Chancellor, as well as Reich Commissioner for Prussia, while the other ministerial posts were occupied by :

Interior : Dr Wilhelm Frick (leader of the Nazi Party in Thuringia).  
Foreign Affairs : Baron von Neurath.  
Reichswehr : General W. von Blomberg.  
Finance : Count von Schwerin-Krosigk.  
Justice : Dr Guertner.  
Economic Affairs and Agriculture : Dr Hugenberg.  
Labour : Seldte (leader of the "Stahlhelm")  
Communications and Post : Baron Eltz von Ruebenach.

Captain Hermann Goering entered the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio and Reich Commissioner for Aviation,<sup>1</sup> as well as von Papen's Deputy in Prussia. Dr Gereke became Reich Commissioner for Employment, but was very soon dismissed.

On March 1933 Dr Goebbels was put in charge of a special Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment.

On the whole, the new Government represented a coalition of all the reactionary forces : National Socialists, Conservatives, German Nationals, Stahlhelm and the Reichswehr.

<sup>1</sup> On May 5, 1933, his office was transformed into an Air-Ministry.

What would be the outcome of this new experiment? The whole anxious world asked this question. While France in general reacted with suspicion, Germany having now shown her true face, Italy was the first to greet the Fuehrer.

"Italy"—wrote the *Giornale d'Italia*—"salutes with true cordiality the formation of a new Government in Germany, under the leadership of a man who since the very beginning of his movement has looked to Mussolini and Fascism." It is interesting to recall also what the American Senator William E. Borah said on January 30, when commenting on the formation of the new German Cabinet:

"I am impressed with the fact that Hitler speaks with the voice of the German people, with reference to certain matters growing out of the World War and Versailles, which will have to be revised in the interest of peace . . ." and he declared: "I think Hindenburg one of the greatest men not alone of this time, but of all time."

Coming from a foreigner this eulogy of Hindenburg was excusable; but the similar pronouncement of a German Social Democrat sounds almost shocking:

"Much of the blame for the fateful development in Germany which is to-day pressing upon Europe like an incubus, has been attributed to Hindenburg. I do not quite agree. This man, filled with a soldier's sense of duty, took his oath to the Constitution seriously despite his fundamental Monarchist convictions and has honestly endeavoured to carry out his constitutional duties."<sup>1</sup>

### *First Steps*

The first act of Hitler's Government, on February 1, was to secure the dissolution of the Reichstag, which von Schleicher had failed to bring about. The new elections were fixed for March 5. This left one month for the electoral campaign. In his Dissolution Decree, the Reich President stressed that he wished to ascertain the attitude of the German nation towards the new Government.

Hitler immediately broadcast a proclamation to the German nation:

"Fourteen years have passed since the German people lost the war, in which they had been attacked and for which, therefore, they had no responsibility . . . Fourteen years of Marxism has ruined Germany . . . Our grey-haired leader in the World War has called upon the men of the

<sup>1</sup> Otto Braun, *Von Weimar zu Hitler*, 2nd ed., p. 204, Europa Verlag, N.Y. 1940.

national parties to link up with a view to saving the Fatherland, and they have responded to his appeal. Their task is a terrible one, but they have confidence in themselves and in the German nation. I feel sure that the peasants, workers and middle class citizens will join with us in the task of building up a Third Reich . . . In foreign politics the National Government will regard as its supreme mission, the protection of our vital rights and the re-conquest of our freedom. . . ”

Hitler further promised two grandiose Four Year Plans to tackle unemployment, establish a compulsory labour service, repopulate country districts, and so forth.

On January 6 the following Decree was issued by von Hindenburg :

“ The decision of the Supreme Court, dated October 25, 1932, caused confusion in the Prussian Government, endangering the well-being of the State. I therefore transfer to the Reich Commissioner for Prussia, until further notice, the powers which the aforesaid decision gave to the Prussian Cabinet.”

Consequently Vice-Chancellor von Papen, on March 5, dissolved the Prussian Diet, despite the protest of the Braun Cabinet that this act was unconstitutional.

On the same day Hitler issued a Decree severely restricting freedom of association and speech throughout the Reich ; this act empowered the Minister of the Interior to stop the circulation in Germany of all foreign papers that failed to comply with the provisions laid down for the German Press.

February 26 was the date of the sensational Reichstag fire. A Communist of Dutch origin, a half-witted young man called van der Lubbe, was accused by the Nazis of causing the fire and the Communist and Socialist Parties were proclaimed his accomplices and the principal culprits. In reality, there can be no doubt that the Reichstag fire was staged by the Nazis themselves, as a pretext for a campaign of hatred against the Socialists and Communists.

A series of totalitarian Emergency Decrees ensued without delay. On February 26 a Decree on high treason and similar offences was promulgated, which contained among others a peculiar clause imposing severe penalties for “ publication of false reports in the foreign Press with the view to their being quoted in the German Press as having originated abroad.” At the same time the Left and extreme Left Press were suppressed in Prussia, as a “ reprisal ” for the Reichstag fire.

*The New Reichstag Election of March 1933*

The Reichstag elections produced the following result :

		Seats.	Votes.
National Socialists	... ..	288	17,260,623
Social Democrats	... ..	120	7,176,505
Communists	... ..	81	4,845,379
Centre Party	... ..	73	4,423,161
Nationals	... ..	52	3,132,595
Bavarian People's Party	... ..	19	1,072,893

while the remaining nine or ten smaller groups, including the State Party and the Christian Socialists, totalled only fourteen Deputies altogether. The Nazis polled forty-three per cent. of the votes, thus obtaining 288 seats out of 647.

The Prussian Landtag elections also took place on March 5.

Goebbels, on March 5, wrote in his diary :

"Success upon success, fantastic and incredible . . . Germany has awakened !"

*The 1933 Reichstag*

The opening of the new Reichstag on March 21, 1933, was accompanied by great pomp. While a Catholic Service was held at the Potsdam Pfarrkirche,<sup>1</sup> Hitler attended a ceremony at the Protestant Garnisonkirche in Potsdam.

The Potsdam Church was filled with Reichstag Deputies (except Socialists and Communists), Brownshirts, Admirals and Generals wearing full-dress uniform, and high Government officials. The ex-Crown Prince, in the uniform of a Lieutenant-General, was present.

Before President von Hindenburg, in Field Marshal's uniform, seated himself on a chair facing the altar, he turned to the Imperial box and saluted the ex-Crown Prince by raising his baton. Then he proceeded to read his speech :

"By my decree of February 1 I dissolved the Reichstag so that the German people might themselves define their attitude towards the Government of national concentration appointed by me. In the election of March 5 our people gave their support by a clear majority to the Government in whom I put my confidence, and by so doing have given them the constitutional foundation for their work.

<sup>1</sup> Which Hitler and Goebbels, although formally Catholics, refused to attend on account of recent declaration of the clergy stigmatizing "the Leaders of the National Socialist Party as traitors who should be refused Sacraments."

"The tasks which you, Chancellor and Ministers, see before you are many and arduous. In both internal and foreign politics, in our own economic situation as in that of the world, there are difficult questions to solve and big decisions to make. I know that you will tackle these tasks with resolution. And I hope that you, for your part, members of the new Reichstag will, on your part, with a clear recognition of the needs of the situation, support the Government and do all in your power to help them in their arduous labours. The place where we are met to-day recalls to our minds the old God-fearing Prussia which by conscientious work, unflinching courage and devotion to the Fatherland, became great, and on this foundation brought unity to the German family. May the spirit of this historic place also inspire the generation of to-day, may it free us from self-seeking and party strife, and draw us together, conscious of our national greatness and spiritually revived, for the good of a united, free and proud Germany."

After von Hindenburg had finished, Hitler read the Government's statement. This contained a repudiation of Germany's responsibility for the World War :

"The Revolution of November 1918 brought to a close a struggle into which the German nation had entered with the most sacred conviction of defending its freedom and therewith its right to live. For neither the Kaiser, nor the Government, nor the people wanted this War. Only the disintegration of the nation compelled a weak generation, against its own conscience and against its most sacred inner conviction, to accept the assertion of German war guilt.

"This collapse had been followed by decay in all spheres, political, moral, cultural, and economic. Worst of all was the destruction of faith in the nation's own strength, the degradation of traditions of confidence. Crisis after crisis had shaken the people. But the rest of the world had not become happier and wealthier through the political and economic bleeding of an important member of its commonwealth. From the crazy theory of permanent victors and vanquished had sprung the madness of reparations, and in consequence the world economic catastrophe.

"Meanwhile the new rally of Germans who, trusting in their own people, sought to shape them into a new community, had begun. On January 30, 1933, the leadership of the Reich was entrusted by the Field Marshal to this young Germany, and on March 5 it was acclaimed by the majority of the people.

"In an unparalleled uprising it has restored the national honour in a few weeks and, thanks to your understanding, Herr Reichs President, has consummated the marriage between the symbols of the old greatness and the young strength."

Germany's Fuehrer continued by saying that the unity of spirit and will of the German nation must be restored and the eternal foundations of German life must be preserved. It was to these principles that the organization

and leadership of the State must be subordinated, for they had always been the prerequisites of the greatness of peoples. People of good will must really work together while those who seek to injure the State will be rendered harmless. A new German nation must be formed out of peasants, burghers and workers. As regards the outside world—Germans would be true friends of a peace which would at last heal the wounds from which all were suffering.

"In the spirit of the Imperial proclamation of 1871 our people has done its share to strengthen and increase the benefits of peace, civilisation and culture. While conscious of its power, it never forgot its responsibility towards the mutual co-operation of European nations."

After having made a panegyric of von Hindenburg, Hitler terminated his speech with the following sentence:

"Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, you have seen the rise of Germany; you have lived to see the work of the great Chancellor Bismarck, you have led us in the great war, and to-day Providence has made you the protector of the re-birth of our people"

The Reich President and his son, Oskar von Hindenburg, then walked to the crypt where Frederick the Great and his father are buried, and placed wreaths in front of each sarcophagus.

At the Reichstag opening, which took place in the Kroll Opera House, the Socialist Deputies were present, but for nine of them who had been put in jail. Captain Goering and the three Deputy Speakers recruited from the Centre, German Nationals and National Socialists, were re-elected by acclamation.

Captain Goering began his speech by saying that "an accursed crime" had compelled the Deputies to move from a building which had once been constructed for the German people. The motives leading a subversive Party to this outrage were known to all. These were historic times and the German people were filled with the holy fire of the national revolution. March 21 was also the date of the opening of the first German Reichstag in 1870; it was then that Prince Bismarck first saw before him the German family united in a German Parliament. What must now be reconstructed was unity, solidarity of all Germans, common sentiment and thought in all matters vital to the nation.

The German people should be grateful to Hitler as the man who fourteen years previously

“undertook to restore this belief and hope in a coming Reich. By arduous toil, by a mighty struggle against terrorism and suppression, his movement has grown from 7 men to 1,000, then to 10,000, to 100,000, and now to millions, who have been seized by the ardent hope that Germany can rise again. Fourteen years of want, of shame, of dishonour, lie behind us. Now, for the first time, we see the dawn of a new era. Weimar has been overcome, and it is symbolic that the new Reichstag has found its way back to the town from which Prussia, and with Prussia Germany had sprung. The spirit of Potsdam will inspire them hereafter. This spirit had enabled them to hold a world of foes at bay for four years, and they have returned there full of gratitude and emotion.”

### *Hitler's Decrees*

The assimilation of the various Federal States by the Reich was speeded up. On March 10 Reich Statthalters were installed in Bavaria, Saxony, Wuerttemberg, Baden and others. The respective Governments resigned. Manfred von Killinger installed himself in Saxony, Wagner in Baden, Mutschmann in Saxony, Sauckel in Thuringia, Murr in Wuerttemberg, while General von Epp took over Bavaria.

On March 16 Dr Schacht was again elected Governor of the Reichsbank, in place of Dr Luther, who was appointed German Ambassador in Washington. The National Socialist Press was jubilant. Dr Goebbels in his *Angriff* explained that Schacht was the man to carry out a policy that would fit the then million unemployed into the economic process, while it was Dr Luther who had always feared currency experiments and prevented any comprehensive scheme to solve the problem of finding work for the German people.

A few months after his appointment, in July 1933, Dr Schacht went to New York and London to attend conferences, from which he returned with the knowledge that no one would for the present grant any new credits to Germany. But this coincided with the beginning of the realization of Schacht's great plan not to pay another penny to the foreign creditors, and to carry the “debtor's war” to a favourable issue for the Reich. Schacht managed, by pressure, exploitation and manoeuvres, to wrest approximately 19 billion marks from other countries. And during



the succeeding years the money went into German armaments, which in 1933-34 absorbed 3 billion marks, in 1934-35  $5\frac{1}{2}$  billions, in 1935-36 10 billions, and in 1936-37 12.6 billions.

The Hindenburg-Hitler-von Papen régime issued without delay a number of Decrees designed to consolidate the new system :

March 13—Decree on the new Reich flag The former black-white-red Imperial flag with the Nazi Swastika flag.

March 14—Decree introducing the same flag in the armed forces.

March 21—Presidential decree granting an amnesty for criminal acts committed by the Nazis in the struggle for the so-called national resurgence.

March 21 (and May 6)—Decree on the establishment of special Courts to deal with political offences against the new régime.

March 24—Enabling Bill, giving dictatorial powers to the Government.

March 31—Law for the complete subordination of the States to the control of the Reich (supplemented by the law relating to Reich Statthalters, dated April 7).

April 7—Law excluding the Jews from all posts in the administration. Same date—Anti-Jewish regulations for advocates<sup>1</sup>

April 10—Law on the introduction of a Holiday of National Labour (May 1)

April 22—Law relating to the student groups at the Universities (*i.e.*, student duels were no longer illegal)

May 12—Law relating to the revival of Teutonic tradition

May 26—Law for the confiscation of Communist property.

All these measures were complemented by various enactments on social, fiscal and economic policy, in accordance with the Nazi program. In a word, Hitler was installing himself methodically in a Nazi and militarist Germany under the watchword : "Gleichschaltung."

We must now enquire into the question how the political Parties responded to Hitler's measures.

### *Submission of the Weimar Parties to Hitler*

The principal Bills included the Enabling Bill<sup>2</sup> of March 24, 1933, which is reproduced below :

#### "ART. 1.

Reich laws may be passed by the Reich Government apart from the process laid down in the Reich Constitution.

<sup>1</sup> Similar anti-Jewish bills were enacted *re* all other professions.

<sup>2</sup> The so-called *Ermaechtungsgesetz*, officially called *Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich* (Law to remedy the distress of the Nation and the Reich).

## ART. 2.

The Reich laws decided upon by the Reich Government may deviate from the Reich Constitution, unless they relate to the institution of the Reichstag and the Reich Council. The rights of the Reich President remain unaffected.

## ART. 3.

The Reich laws decided upon by the Reich Government will be drafted by the Reich Chancellor and published in the Reich Law Journal.

## ART. 4.

The Reich's agreements with foreign States relating to subjects of Reich legislation do not require the consent of the bodies participating in legislation.

## ART. 5.

The present Law comes into force on the date of its promulgation. It becomes invalid on April 1, 1937. It also becomes invalid if the present Reich Government is replaced by another."

Second in importance was the law relating to Reich Statthalters; its object was to define the legal competence of the Reich Commissioners, giving them dictatorial powers over the local Government:

## "ART. 1.

The Reich President will appoint Statthalters proposed by the Chancellor to all the Federal States, with the exception of Prussia. The duties of these officials will consist in supervising the execution of political directives given by the Chancellor.

## ART. 2.

Appointed for the duration of the Reichstag, the Statthalters are invested with power to dissolve the Diet (Landtag), to appoint and recall the head of the Government, to nominate and to depose officials and judges."

The autonomy of the German Federal States thus became a thing of the past.

When on March 23, 1933, the Enabling Bill was submitted to the Reichstag, it was passed by 441 votes against 94 Socialist votes. It is important to examine the statements made on that occasion by different political groups in the Reichstag. Let us begin with the Socialists, who although voting against the Bill, nevertheless tried to please the new master of Germany and affirmed their agreement with the foreign aims of the Nazi Government, which were known to them, as they had been outlined in *Mein Kampf* and several public statements of the Nazi Party. Otto Wels, on their behalf, made the following statement:

"We Social Democrats agree with the foreign political demands for

German equality advanced by the Reich Chancellor all the more emphatically, because we have always stood for them on principle. May I in this connection venture the personal observation that I was the first German to oppose the untruth concerning the guilt of the German people for the outbreak of the world war before an international forum—this was at the Berne Conference on February 3, 1919. No principles of our Party ever could, or ever did prevent us from representing the just demands of the German nation as against other nations of the world. The Reich Chancellor the day before yesterday pronounced a sentence in Potsdam to which we subscribe. It was this. 'The crazy theory of permanent victors and vanquished gave birth to the insanity of Reparations, from which arose the catastrophe of world economy.' This sentence applies no less to home policy. Here too, the theory of permanent victors and vanquished is crazy.

"However, the Reich Chancellor's statement also reminds us of another that was made on July 23, 1919, in the National Assembly. It was then said: 'We are defenceless. But being defenceless is not the same as being without honour. True, our enemies want to get at our honour. There is no doubt about that. But we believe to the last breath that this attempt to dishonour us will one day recoil on the originators themselves, that it is not our honour that will perish in this world tragedy!'

"This is contained in a statement made at that time by a Government headed by Social Democrats on behalf of the German nation before the whole world four hours before the expiration of the Armistice, in order to prevent the further advance of our enemies. That statement constitutes a valuable supplement to the Reich Chancellor's statement.

"No blessing will come out of a peace of violence, particularly at home. It is not possible to found a real national community upon it. The first condition is equal rights. The Government may protect itself against flagrant excesses of controversy, it may prevent with severity appeals to violence and violence itself. This may be done if it is done uniformly and impartially in all directions, and if defeated opponents are not treated as if they were outlaws. Freedom and life can be taken from us, but not honour."

Mgr Kaas followed as representative of the Catholic Party:

"The present hour cannot be, for us, in the sign of words. Its law, its only, dominant law, is one of quick, defensive, constructive action of rescue. This action can be born only in unity. In dissension and struggle it would threaten to break up at birth.

"The German Centre Party, which despite all previous disappointments has for long emphatically and with conviction represented the great idea of unity, now, when all minor and petty considerations must be silent, deliberately and with a sense of national responsibility, places itself beyond all party-political and other considerations. It relegates to the background even those considerations which in normal times involved its duty and were scarcely surmountable. In view of the urgent need in which the people and the State find themselves at present,

in view of the gigantic tasks which German reconstruction imposes on us, in view, above all, of the storm clouds that are beginning to rise in and around Germany, we of the Centre Party at this hour offer our hand to all, even our former opponents, in order to ensure the continuance of the national work of rescue, to accelerate the restoration of an ordered political and legal life, to oppose a strong resistance to chaotic developments, together with all those—from whatever camp or group of German compatriots they may come—who have an honest will for reconstruction and order.

“The Government’s introductory statement which you, Herr Reich Chancellor, made this afternoon before the representatives of the German people, included many a word to which we can subscribe, and many another—let me say this candidly, but with a loyal candidness—which we deliberately refuse to accept, in the interest of unity, which is the law of the hour, as in regard to the judgment of history on the work of the Governments supported by us.

“Some of the objective statements made by you, Herr Reich Chancellor, give us—and I say this frankly and with satisfaction—the possibility with regard to essential individual points of German political, legal and cultural life, and above all in connection with the statements made in the preliminary negotiations, of viewing in a different light a number of essential objections which the time-limit and scope of the Enabling Law has aroused in our minds

“On the assumption that the statements made by you will be the principle and the practical basis for the performance of the anticipated legislative work, the German Centre Party gives its consent to the Enabling Law.”

In the same debate Herr von Lex (Bavarian People’s Party), Dr Maier (Wuerttemberg) for the State Party (Democrats), Simpfendorfer (for Christian Socialist Volksdienst), also spoke in favour of this law on dictatorial powers for Hitler. Here are their statements.

Ritter von Lex (Bavarian Catholic People’s Party) :

“The Bavarian People’s Party, as a party of Christian-National outlook and policy, has after the shameful Revolution of 1918 fought, above all, for the preservation and restoration of a patriotic mentality among all classes and sections of the people. The Bavarian Prime Minister, a member of the Party, was one of the first German statesmen to refute, in 1922, before the whole world the lie of German war guilt. Since its existence the Bavarian People’s Party has wrought with determination for the fostering of the patriotic idea, particularly among young people. . . . It is obvious that a party that was and is animated by such an attitude, is also fully prepared to give active co-operation in the work of national reconstruction at the historic turning point of the present day. . . . We are therefore in the position to agree to the Enabling Law.

“At the same time, we express the hope that the Enabling Law will be carried out and handled within the limits of Christian moral law. No Enabling Law can exempt a government or an individual from this

duty. Before God, the German people and German history, we place the responsibility for the application of the Enabling Law in the hands of the Government."

Simpfendoerfer (Christl. Sozialer Volksdienst):

"The Volksdienst approves of the domestic and particularly of the foreign political aims of the Reich Government expounded by the Reich Chancellor to-day. It is prepared to contribute its share to the co-operation so impressively demanded by the Reich Chancellor, and therefore agrees to the Enabling Law."

Hitler's reply to Wels was as brutal as Wels' statement was undignified:

"You come late, but you come. The fine theories which you, Mr Deputy Wels, have just announced here, are communicated to world history somewhat late. You state that the Socialist Party subscribes to our foreign political program, that it rejects the war guilt lie, that it is against Reparations. And now there is only the question: Where was this struggle at the time when you had the power in your hands?"

"... You ought to have prevented a new Constitution being imposed on the German people at the wish and command of foreign countries. For it is not honourable to allow your internal developments to be forced upon you by enemies

"... You say you are the bearer of Socialism. You are the bearer of that mysterious Socialism which the German people never saw in reality.

"... You further say that Social Democracy cannot be thought away even by us, because it was first to make this place free for the people, for the working people, and not only for barons and counts. With all this you come too late. Why did you not instruct in your mentality in time your friend Grzesinski and your other friends Braun and Severing, who for years reproached me with being only a journeyman house-painter?"

(Protests from Social Democrats. Reichstag Speaker Goering shouts: "Quiet! The Chancellor is settling accounts.")

### *Socialists*

When Otto Wels was making his statement in the Reichstag, the Socialist Labour International was holding a conference in Paris. This was attended by no German Social Democrat; nevertheless, a resolution of protest was passed concerning conditions in Germany. This induced Wels to send the following telegram (on March 30):

"I resign from the Executive of the Socialist Labour International owing to the resolutions passed by the Executive without any invitation to or collaboration with German representatives."

In this connection it is worth while recalling that a Reich Conference of the German Social Democratic Party, with delegates from all parts of the Reich, was held in Berlin on April 27. Party Chairman Wels reported on the political situation and on the next tasks of Social Democracy. After a debate lasting several hours, the Conference unanimously adopted a resolution recognising the need for an international struggle against capitalism, and enjoining continued adherence to the principles of the Social Democratic Party and continued work within the framework of the existing legal possibilities.

The Party Executive placed its office at the disposal of the Reich Conference. Otto Wels and Hans Vogel were elected as Party Chairmen, the other members of the Executive being: Aufhaeuser, Boeckel, Crummenerl, Dietrich, Dr Hertz, Loebe, Frau Lukas, Kuenstler, Frau Kemnitz, Ollenhauer, Rinner, Frau Ryneck, Sollmann, Stahl, Stampfer, Stelling, Westphal and Wittke. Dr Breitscheid, Dr Hilferding, Dittmann, Crispian, Otto Braun, Loewenstein, Grzesinski and Frau Toni Sender were not re-elected—evidently for the reason that they had meanwhile left Germany for different destinations.

When Friedrich Stampfer, former editor of *Vorwärts*, subsequently left Germany and stated in the foreign Press that the Social Democrats of the Reichstag "only agreed to the Government statement under compulsion," in this connection Loebe, on June 7, declared to the Ministry of Interior that, as one of the leaders of the Party, he did not approve of this assertion, and that the Social Democratic parliamentary group had made their statement from objective considerations.<sup>1</sup>

The decisive consideration was that the Government of national resurgence stood for an absolute will to peace, equal rights for Germany and universal disarmament of Germany's enemies. Loebe also produced a statement of the S.P.D. Executive printed on May 17, in which the Party's approval was explained in the same manner.

Several members of the newly elected Executive later crossed the German frontier, most of them probably owing to the sequestration of the Social Democratic Party's property, including real estate and printing works. They

<sup>1</sup> See *Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 7, 1933.

regarded this as a definite paralysation of Party activity. The men in question, including Messrs Wels, Stampfer, Vogel and the Treasurer of the S.P.D. (Deputy Dr Hertz also left Germany soon after), now settled in Prague and decided to form a new Party Executive, officially informing the Second International of their decision.

On May 17 Wels sent a letter to the Second International containing the following paragraph :

"The time when we were in a position to hope to save something by eliminating pretexts for violent measures, is past. It is now our task to resume the struggle of the working class under conditions of complete Fascist Terror."

Herr Wels added a withdrawal of his resignation from the Bureau of the Second International, stating that he wished to retain his function as one of the German Social Democratic representatives in the Executive of the Second International. At the same time he made out that his earlier resignation was due to purely tactical reasons. The members of the Executive who remained in Germany were not slow in their reaction to the steps taken by their colleagues in Prague. They met on June 10, and, in reply to the constitution of a new Executive in Prague, they unequivocally resolved : "The seat of the Party Executive is in Germany."<sup>1</sup>

The often servile, but always timid attitude of the German Socialists did not save them from disaster. The Nazis were determined to destroy their organization completely. On May 10 the Berlin Attorney-General ordered the sequestration of the property of the entire German Social Democratic Party and of all its newspapers, and also that of the Reichsbanner. The premises of the above organizations were closed.

On June 24 the former Reichstag Speaker and leader of the Social Democratic Reichstag Group, Paul Loebe, and other prominent leaders of this Party were taken into "protective" custody by the State Secret Police. On the same day, Reich Minister of the Interior, Dr Frick, excluded all the Socialists who still belonged to national or municipal representations from the exercise of their functions.

<sup>1</sup> See *Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 11, 1933.

*Attitude of the Free Trade Unions*

Let us examine the attitude of the trade unions. On the day of Hitler's accession to power, Theodor Leipart, chairman of the organization, issued the following directive: "Though we are against the new Government, the present hour commands 'Organization' and not 'Demonstration'."

But after the March Reichstag election even this was abandoned.<sup>1</sup> On March 10, on behalf of the Federal Executive, Leipart addressed a letter to the Reich President, which included the following:

"Dear Mr Reich President,

In the sign of the day of mourning which next Sunday is to unite the German nation, regardless of political creed, in remembrance of those who fell in the war, the Federal Executive of the A.D.G.B. again approaches you as the German leader who in his person combines the tradition of the old and the dignity of the new Germany.

In our Fatherland, torn by antagonisms, you, Mr Reich President, represent the unity of our people beyond the frontiers of party. In the confidence that you are still the guardian and guarantor of the popular rights laid down in the Constitution, in the conviction that you are still prepared and resolved to oppose any party-political arbitrariness, we approach you on behalf of many millions of organised German workers and their families with the request to cry a halt to the legal insecurity which in many German towns threatens the life and property of the German workers. . . ."

On April 7, Leipart made a speech before the Federal Executive of the German General Federation of Trade Unions, where he stated that the Trade Unions could demand recognition from the Government, for they, too, recognised the latter's great aim as regards the internal and external freedom of the nation and that the Government was founded on the creative forces of the whole nation.

May 1, having been chosen by Hitler as the National Labour Day, the responsible leaders of the Social Democratic Trade Union Federations decided to call upon the members of the trade unions to take part in the celebrations.

"Although this attitude of the A.D.G.B. was to be expected," wrote the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on that occasion,<sup>2</sup> "in view of the public declaration expressing readiness to collaborate in the State, the attitude of the A.D.G.B. must be regarded as a fundamental decision whose political significance cannot be overlooked."

<sup>1</sup> See Konrad Heiden, in *Geburt des deutschen Reichs*, Zurich, 1934, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> See *Frankfurter Zeitung* of April 21, 1933.



In the same issue, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* reminds us of a resolution of the Conference of Free Trade Unions of the Saar territory,<sup>1</sup> which ran as follows:

"The free trade unions have hitherto in every way firmly advocated that the Saar territory, as ancient German land, must revert undiminished to the German national community. This attitude as to national allegiance of our narrower homeland also remains for the future. The attitude of the free trade unions as regards the return of the Saar is independent of political events in Germany. As members of the free German trade unions, and our destiny being closely linked with theirs, we hope that the endeavours of the Federal Executive of the A.D.G.B. to obtain free working and living space in the national community as well may be crowned with success."

It may be remembered that at that time<sup>2</sup> the representatives of Dutch professional organizations passed a resolution relating to the attitude of the German trade union movement towards the Hitler Government. This pointed out, first of all, that according to a statement by the Socialist organ, *Het Volk*, the Executive of the General Federation of German Trade Unions<sup>3</sup> offered its collaboration to Hitler's Fascist Government and expressed the wish to be incorporated with the Fascist State. The Federation failed to participate in the meeting of the International Federation of Trade Unions, though there was no valid resolution of the members of the German trade union movement to that effect. In this connection the Executive of the German Federations was reproached "for having recognised the Fascist dictator Government, and having supported it." In view of the fact that this involved the greatest danger to the Dutch trade union movement, the members were called upon to secure an unequivocal condemnation of the attitude of the German Trade Union Federation.

This critical view was shared by many others. Léon Blum, the French Socialist leader, admitted<sup>4</sup> that men like Leipart, Grassmann or Loche saw in the Racist and Fascist

<sup>1</sup> The Saar territory was still at that time under an international régime. The above resolution cannot be therefore explained by the Nazi terror.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Telegr. Union*, Berlin, April 23, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> The "Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund" was formed in 1919. It comprised workers, employees and officials organized on a free trade union basis. At the peak of its career it had approximately seven million members. During the last years prior to 1933 there was a decline. But still, at the beginning of 1933 it had about four million members.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Populaire*, July 25, 1933.

movement a beginning of the realization of the Socialist program.

The trade unions were also not saved by their readiness to come to terms with the Nazis. Repressive measures were not long in coming. At the end of April 1933, under the leadership of the Nazi "Betriebszellen-Organization," the premises of the Socialist Trade Unions were occupied by S.A., S.S. and police.

"... It is our will to make the Trade Unions really free, free from the spirit of internationalism, free from Marxism, above all free from the Social Democratic Party. But free also from corruption and anti-worker parasites,"

declared the *Voelkischer Beobachter*. On May 2 the Nazi Party took over the entire organization of Leipart's Trade Unions.

Reichstag Deputy Walter Schuhmann, leader of the N.S.B.O.<sup>1</sup> was appointed leader of all the workers' associations. Reichstag Deputy Albert Forster (from Danzig!) was appointed leader of all the employees' associations. A similar fate was prepared for the Catholic Trade Unions. On April 30 Dr Ley, leader of the "Labour Front," issued the following order:

"... All posts of the Christian Trade Unions and Employees Associations are to be filled by National Socialists. I expel from the German Labour Front the following members of the great Labour convent of the German Labour Front: Bernhard Otto, Friedrich Baltrusch, Dr Theodor Brauer, Franz Behrens, as well as the other leaders of the Christian Trade Unions. ... This is to show that all who dare to touch the great revolutionary reconstruction of our country will stand in contempt for all time."

### *The Catholic Centre*

At all events, the Catholic Centre did everything in its power to please the new masters of the Reich, though it could not hope to survive any more than the Socialist Party. At the same time, whereas the Socialists who wanted to come to terms with Hitler had to abandon only the Marxist doctrines, in the case of the Catholics it was a matter of abandoning religious principles. They were bound to be aware of this because, before 1933, the Church had repeatedly called the attention of the faithful to the incompatibility of the Christian doctrine with that of the

<sup>1</sup> National-sozialistische Betriebszellen-Organisation.

Nazi Party. For instance, the German bishops had condemned the race theory.

In September 1931 the Vicar General of the Diocese of Mainz published a statement justifying the refusal of a Church burial for the late National Socialist Deputy Gemeinder. The statement said that the "German Bishops have unanimously condemned National Socialism as a heresy, because both its written and unwritten program contained doctrines that contradicted the Catholic doctrine."

"Thus no Catholic is allowed to be a member of the National Socialist Party, or even canvass for its leaders, and a member of the Party cannot receive a Church burial unless he has before his death in some way signified repentance of his disobedience. These doctrines apply to every Catholic, whether Prince or beggar, rich or poor, Deputy or ordinary citizen. As in the present case there was no reason for leniency, a strict application of the rule was necessary."<sup>1</sup>

Still, on March 7, 1933, the agitation of the National Socialists against dignitaries of the Catholic Church caused the Bishops of Western Germany to publish a statement expressing the negative attitude of the Catholic Church to the National Socialist movement.<sup>2</sup>

But, on the whole, while rejecting the anti-religious teaching of the Nazis, German Catholics accepted or hoped to be able to accept, their political views. The Catholics, led by their Bishops, always "were trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, to flatter the hangman and console the victim . . . A political party with such soldiers was doomed to die, unwept, unhonoured and unsung."<sup>3</sup>

In the new Reichstag the Catholics not only maintained their strength, but gained five seats. Strangely enough, this was due to Leftist support of Centre candidates, while a large number of Catholic electors had voted for Hitler, whose foreign policy, in particular, had a powerful attraction for them. Immediately after the elections, Hitler turned not only against the Communists—whom he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Berliner Tageblatt*, September 11, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> The statement was signed by Cardinal Schulte, Archbishop of Cologne and Apostolic Administrator of Aachen, John—Bishop of Muenster, Wilhelm—Bishop of Osnabruck, Franz Rudolf—Bishop of Trier, Antonius—Bishop of Limburg. The statement again called attention to the grave dangers threatening the morals of the Catholics through National Socialism (See text in *Berliner Tageblatt*, March 7, 1933.)

<sup>3</sup> R. d'Harcourt, *The German Catholics*, 1939, p. 84 and 106.

simply suppressed—and the Socialists, but also against political Catholicism.

On March 11, in a declaration of policy at Essen, Goering stated that the Weimar emblem represented the union of the Black Catholic International, Red Socialism, and the Gold of Jewish finance. "The Catholics, the 'Blacks'," he said, "had kept guard for the fourteen years of the Weimar Republic while the Marxists burgled the German house." On March 29, the *Voelkischer Beobachter* wrote: "The primary and fiercest adversaries of the new (Nazi) Party were the parliamentary Centrists. The Church leaders followed them." Eminent Catholics, as von Cramer-Klett, were thrown into prison just like many Socialists, as for example, Luppe, the Social Democratic Mayor of Nuremberg.

However, this did not prevent the German Bishops from publishing, on March 28, an optimistic statement in which they expressed their confidence that the "general prohibitions and warnings issued from time to time would not be necessary in future." The Archbishop of Cologne, forgetting his own statement on March 7, even permitted Nazis in uniform—individually and in groups—to take the sacraments, and he also raised the ban on religious burial for Nazis.

The Pastoral letter issued by all the German Bishops on June 3, 1933, stated:

"The men at the head of the State have to our great joy given a formal assurance that they take their stand on Christianity. This is a frank declaration which deserves a sincere attitude on the part of all Catholics."

Later, in June, many members of the clergy and members of the Bavarian People's Party and the Centre were prosecuted for alleged activities against the State. On July 5 Bruening, who in May had succeeded Mgr. Kaas as Chairman of the Centre Party, informed President Hindenburg of the Party's decision to dissolve itself.

After this, the Party published a manifesto in an entirely servile tone. "There was not a glance of pride on the past," comments Robert d'Harcourt in his book on German Catholicism,<sup>1</sup> "not a farewell to the warriors, but

<sup>1</sup> R. d'Harcourt, *Op. cit.*, p. 84 sq.

simply the servility to which the Gleichschaltung of the Press had accustomed us. There were frantic protestations of fidelity to the new régime, it smelt of the *ruunt in servitutum*. There was no question of anything but 'positive contribution' and 'unreserved devotion' to strengthen 'the new legal order.' Painful and futile abasement ! No servility is so distressing as ineffective servility."

Indeed, until the very last moment the Catholic Centre, which had played such a leading role under the Weimar Republic, manifested a willingness to use all its power in the service of Hitlerite Germany :

"Hence the lamentable vote of plenary powers and the approval of the Fuehrer's great speech on foreign policy in the spring. Hitler needed Catholic votes to give him a larger platform in talking to the world. He took the ballot papers and suppressed the Party. All this is perfectly and very sadly clear. Looking back to those first five months of 1933, we see that the Centre, after its condemnation at the polls, was allowed just time enough to dishonour itself and serve its enemy.

"We have spoken of the ignominious death of a great Party, but there was something worse in the refusal even to accompany the body of a friend to the cemetery. In the whole of the Catholic Press, which had lived on the Centre Party, there was not a decent obituary notice. Only the Austrian journalists broke this shameful silence round the tomb. The *Vienna Reichspost* in its issue of July 7 wrote a moving 'Abschied vom Zentrum' (Farewell to the Centre)."<sup>1</sup>

To crown it all, the Catholic organ *Rhein-Mainische Volkszeitung* pleaded for a positive policy of collaboration with the Nazis :

"It will not be enough for us German Catholics to accomplish our religious task within the framework of the new State. Newspapers must not be content to declare their loyalty to the State by carrying out their task in the Church. We must do more than realise that, thanks to our new position, we can more easily recognise the new State than the Weimar State and the Monarchy before it. No, this is not enough. Faced with the new destiny of Germany, the new mission which finds us palpitating with emotion and admiration, we find the protestations of loyalty and desire to help of some Catholics pale and anaemic. They seem not to have fully realised the intimate contact with the spirit of the National Socialist Revolution, with its positive content and its historic tendencies. . . . The flame must be kept alight, and the best minds of Catholicism, particularly among the youth, must not be content with a simple and inadequate adaptation but must devote themselves with passion to the historic task of National Socialism."

<sup>1</sup> R. d'Harcourt, *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

The article concluded with this amazing sentence :

" Now that the obstacles of Weimar have fallen and the dissolution of the Centre has cleared the road . . . we must not be content to be dreamers, we must do a real job of work (*rechte Arbeit tun*)."<sup>1</sup>

### *The Concordat of July 1933*

The amazing humility of the German Catholics and their willingness to accept the Nazi yoke may be partly explained by the fact that Hitler, while persecuting the Catholic Centre, did his utmost to be on good terms with the Holy See. Soon after his accession, on the suggestion of von Papen, he decided to conclude a Concordat. The drafts were exchanged at the Holy See between von Papen and the Secretary of State, Mgr. Pacelli, and the Concordat was signed on July 20, 1933. On paper it granted extensive rights to the Catholics. The event was greeted with a flood of articles, pamphlets and books written by German Catholics, who spoke for the "Holy year of the German Church and people." One author, Professor Eschweiler, of the Catholic University of Braunsberg, East Prussia, went so far as to compare the Hitlerite sterilization laws with the "*Casti Connubii*" Encyclical, though this earned him suspension from his post by the Roman authorities. By the irony of fate, or perhaps of von Papen himself, the sterilization laws were introduced a few days after the signing of the Concordat. At the University Catholic Congress held in Maria-Laach in the summer of 1933, in an atmosphere saturated with National Socialism, von Papen presented in a new, rosy light the future awaiting Catholicism in Nazi Germany. And Rev. Father Ildefons Herwegen, the Abbot, made a symbolic comparison between the principle of authority in the Third Reich and that of the monasteries.

Very soon they all had cause to regret their facile optimism—all except von Papen, who had misled them.

They learned at their own expense, though too late, that the tenets of the Catholic Church were absolutely irreconcilable with the thesis of an Alfred Rosenberg or a Professor Ernst Bergmann, whose views were summarized

<sup>1</sup> R. d'Harcourt, *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

thus in his book on a National German Church (published in 1933):

"Our people must be emancipated from Christianity. The Christian Church is contrary to ethics . . . Christianity to-day is an anachronism."

In this connection we must not omit to mention the activities of General Ludendorff. No longer in the foreground, but still active, the former dictator of the Reich, who was at that time preparing his famous book on *The Total War*—a forecast of the German aggression of 1939—had then recently written, in collaboration with his wife, an abominable book on *Liberation from Christ*.<sup>1</sup> In the preface they wrote: "Christianity has destroyed the German soul and has rendered more difficult for men the accomplishment of their divine task." The author's grievance against Christianity was rooted in the old conceit of pan-Germanism, of which national Socialism was but an offspring.

### *The Protestants*

After the abolition of the monarchy in 1918, which was followed by the withdrawal of State support, German Protestantism entered a period of vacillations and contradictory tendencies which certainly made it easy for the National Socialists to lay their hands on it.

Like the Catholic Church, Protestant circles in Germany remained hostile to the neo-paganism of Alfred Rosenberg and company. Nevertheless, with the advent of Nazism there was a general demand in Germany for a compromise, for the establishment of a *modus vivendi* with the new régime. Some of the collected sermons<sup>2</sup> of Gerhard Bauer, Vicar of St Margaret's in Gotha, emphasised the necessity of opposing neo-pagan and racialism. That was true adherence to principles. At the same time, however, Bauer praised the new régime from the political point of view. That was compromise. This is what he said:

" . . . The Germans again constitute one People led by one Leader. The German People has found itself again after years of trials and tribulations. The Fuehrer is right when he says that a miracle has taken place in the past months. Would it not be feasible that an inspired man should

<sup>1</sup> *Erlösung von Christo*, Munich, Ed. Ludendorff, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Reich Gottes—und Drittes Reich*, Goettingen, 1934.

rise, point to the miracle and exclaim: 'Blessed be the eyes that see what you see' . . . We have enough to be thankful for this huge internal revolution that has taken place. We can well say that without it an advancement was impossible and our nation would have died of debility." (pp. 11 and 34)

Bauer endeavoured to reconcile the irreconcilable. On the other hand, Pastor Joachim Hossenfelder, the most prominent representative of the "Deutsche Christen" group,<sup>1</sup> asserted that fire and water were one and the same thing. He said:

" . . . Christian faith is an heroic manly thing. God speaks in a more powerful language through blood and *Volk* than he does through the idea of humanity." Reviewing what Christ had done for Germany, he said: "Bismarck had forged the Reich on the anvil of war. For four years Hindenburg had defended it with his sword. Now, after fourteen years, during which death had taken the place of life . . . God had again chosen his man—one of the millions of the Great War—and had given him the greatest mission in German history, a man compact of purity, piety, energy and strength of character, our Adolf Hitler."<sup>2</sup>

One cannot help remembering the impressions of James W. Gerard, American Ambassador in Imperial Germany, of religious conditions in Germany at the beginning of the last war:

" . . . I saw no signs of any great religious revival, no greater attendance at the churches. Perhaps this was because I was in the Protestant part of Germany where the Church is under the direct control of the Government and where the people feel that in attending Church they are only attending an extra drill where they will be told of the glories of the autocracy and the necessity of obedience. In fact many State-paid preachers launched sermons of hate from their State-owned pulpits."<sup>3</sup>

### *Hitler's Intransigence and Political Emigration*

Thus it was not firm opposition or refusal to collaborate with the Nazis which provoked persecutions, but the attitude of Hitler himself, who was determined not to compromise with anybody, whether Catholics or Socialists.

<sup>1</sup> This group comprised theologians of all denominations, Lutherans and members of the Reformed Church, Conservatives and Liberals and strict pietists. They all supported Hitler's Reich Bishop Mueller, contrary to the "Bekennende Kirche" of Pastor Niemöller who did not compromise with Nazism.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted from A. S. Duncan-Jones (the Dean of Chichester), whose book *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Germany* (Gollancz, London, 1938) is recognised as the best general study of the subject in English.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from pp. 109-110 *Face to Face with Kaiserism*, by James W. Gerard, Hodder & Stoughton, 1918.



The position of the leaders of the Left as well as of the moderate parties had thus become very difficult. The National Socialists had made it quite clear that they would not compromise with them, and all they could do was either to remain in Germany and keep quiet so as to avoid being sent to a concentration camp or to go into exile and defend the German cause outside the Reich, each in his own way, as they had been doing previously in Germany.

Of the Catholics, Dr Bruening left in 1934, and eventually established himself in the United States. Mgr. Kaas settled down in the Vatican, while J. Wirth went to Switzerland. The Socialists flocked to Prague, Britain and the United States. The leaders were soon joined by minor politicians, who were almost unknown in Germany, and became stars only on emigration.

### *"Equal Rights"*

At the Reichstag sitting of May 17, Hitler made a big speech justifying Germany's claim to equal rights; he spoke of the "restoration of a stable and authoritarian government, borne by the confidence and will of the nation, which will at last restore this great people to the status of a worthy contracting party with the rest of the world."

After Hitler's speech, the National Socialists, German Nationals, Centre and Bavarian People's Party tabled the following resolution:

"The German Reichstag, as the representation of the German people, approves the Reich Government's statement and closes its ranks behind the Reich Government in the question of destiny of the German people's equality of rights, which is decisive for the life of the nation."

All the members of the Reichstag voted for the Resolution, including the Social Democratic Deputies present.<sup>1</sup> The Press reports related that the Deputies, as well as the public in the galleries, rose to their feet, vociferously cheering the Reich Chancellor. Thereupon the National Socialists intoned "Deutschland ueber Alles," which was sung by the entire House. Then Speaker Goering declared that Parliament was closed; the sitting had lasted one hour.

<sup>1</sup> The *Frankfurter Zeitung's* report of May 18 on the sitting goes on: "There were gaps only in the Social Democratic benches, as about twenty members of the group are still in protective custody, while several others are abroad."

A few days later, the former Reichswehr Minister, Dr Gessler (Democrat), expressed his joy at and confidence in the achievements of National Socialism in an article entitled *Leadership and Co-operation*:<sup>1</sup>

"Has it at last come, the turn in the German destiny that has been so often announced, feared by some, hoped for by millions? Is the oft-heard prophecy being fulfilled. It cannot go on like this, there must be a change?

"... German resurgence must bring us the realisation of our national wish: a new State as the strong form of life of a united people menaced in its existence, with equality of rights among the other nations, a just economic constitution that will give work and bread to the industrious hands of all Germans, a harmoniously organised social order which regards the great masses not only as nature's mass product, and places communal sense before class hatred and the caste spirit."

### *Beginning of Appeasement Towards Hitlerite Germany*

Hitler could now devote his whole attention to foreign policy. His friend Mussolini succeeded in securing the Four Power Pact, which was signed in Rome on July 5, 1933. As Pacts concluded in the name of power-politics always omit some party, this Pact lacked the United States and the U.S.S.R. among its signatories. The Rome Pact was to reinforce the solidarity of Germany, Britain, France and Italy in a way which would "strengthen confidence in peace in Europe." Article 1 of the Pact, which was concluded for a period of ten years, declared that the High Contracting Parties would consult together on all questions which appertained to them. Alfred Rosenberg wrote in the *Voelkischer Beobachter* that this was perhaps "historically the most important agreement of the last fourteen years . . ."

The object of the Four Power Pact was to divide the governance of Europe between the Four Great Powers, two of which were totalitarian. Such a collaboration could only operate to the detriment of the small countries, which it would have transformed into little more than bargaining counters; but this was entirely in accordance with the traditional ideas of the Germans, who always favoured a

<sup>1</sup> See *Berliner Tageblatt* article "German Whitsun," 1933, June 4, 1933.

concert of Great Powers and had nothing but contempt for the rights and interests of the small countries. The Four Power Pact might as easily have been signed by Bethmann-Hollweg or Stresemann; it was a mere accident that it was in fact signed on behalf of Hitler. Although the Pact was never ratified by the Western Powers, owing to the opposition of European public opinion, its spirit engendered the passive acceptance of the annexation of Austria and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is the end of our story, which relates chiefly to the events arising from the actions and sentiments of the "other Germany," the Germany after the defeat of 1918, which foreign opinion considered to be democratic and peaceable, and which was trusted by the other nations. Adolf Hitler's Germany is beyond the scope of this book. But then, its history is better known than that of the Germany of Weimar. Every newspaper reader knows a great deal of it—more than he thinks.

The Third Reich for a long time lived on the credit accorded to the Republic. The Four Power Pact having launched Adolf Hitler on his diplomatic career, he immediately flung himself into an attack on the Versailles Treaty. He found the ground well prepared by the "other Germany." During the previous fifteen years, international opinion had been systematically in the service of German propaganda, which had found credence everywhere. When a German was making propaganda for his country the world took his word for it; but the Latin proverb "*audiat et altera pars*" was rarely followed. The Versailles Treaty was attacked with slogans which the Weimar Republic had so firmly implanted in Western opinion that they are still alive to-day and difficult to eliminate.

Thus, international opinion before 1933 came to the conclusion that Germany in 1919 had been the victim of the hatred of the victorious Powers and that the "chains" of Versailles were shackling her unjustly, for she only wanted to live in peace and contribute to the cultural and

economic development of the world.<sup>1</sup> Morally the Versailles Treaty was so completely undermined by Weimarian propaganda that it seemed utterly perished even to the nations that had signed it. The atmosphere was ripe. All Hitlerite Germany had to do was to gather the fruits, without any fear of unexpected resistance. Hitler began with his Decree of March 16, 1935, restoring conscription, creating thirty-six new divisions (500,000 men) and abolishing all the restrictions imposed by the Versailles Treaty on German armaments. German rearmament, which had been carried on in secret by the Republic, now entered into an overt phase. War production went on at capacity; division upon division was trained. All this would have been impossible without long preparation, and such preparation had in fact begun fifteen years before the advent of Hitler, at a time when he was still an obscure and unknown person.<sup>2</sup>

In March 1936, the demilitarised Rhineland zone was occupied, and the Reich immediately began to construct the famous Siegfried Line there. In 1938 Austria and the Sudetenland were annexed. In March 1939 Czechoslovakia was finally conquered, and on September 1, 1939, the second world war began by a German attack on Poland, as that of 1914 had begun by a German attack on Belgium.

To-day, the eyes of many people are again turning to "another Germany," just as in 1918-1933. Where is that "other Germany"? The German officer commanding the invading troops, the German soldier ravaging the Continent without ever disobeying the orders of his superiors, the German intellectual proclaiming the superiority of the *Herrenvolk*, the German worker producing the instruments of destruction without ever daring to strike, the peasant light-heartedly installed in farms stolen from Poles and others—to which Germany do they belong? Will they be able to forget the recent past and, after the defeat, live

<sup>1</sup> It is of some interest to compare this view with another, that of a famous German thinker, O. Spengler, who said: "The legend that a mild peace could prevent a Second World War would only have originated in heads that had never studied the German mind."

<sup>2</sup> Major Wurmwiedler, of the German General Staff, said quite openly on May 26, 1941, in a broadcast: "When the Fuehrer came into power in 1933 he found all the technical preparations for rearmament ready, thanks to the Reichswehr."

peaceably and without any after-thoughts? Will they be immune from the virus of nationalist agitation?

The answer must be left to the commonsense of the individual.<sup>1</sup> But it depends on this answer whether those who died in the Second German war for the cause of the United Nations will not have perished in vain, as did their fathers in 1914-1918.

THE END.

<sup>1</sup> We may quote here the words of Mr Henry Morgenthau, Treasury Secretary of the United States, Speaking on November 19, 1943, about the German war prisoners in Allied hands, he said:

"They are mighty arrogant, they believe in Hitler, and say the Russian campaign is the fault of the German generals.

"They do not understand when you talk to them about democracy.

"They say: 'What is a nation without a Fuehrer? That is chaos.'

"Then, if you pursue the subject of their present leader they may admit he is not perfect, but he will have to do until they get another.

"And they say their next Fuehrer will win the next great war."

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SPECIAL LITERATURE RELATING TO GERMANS ABROAD 607

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# ALPHABETICAL REGISTER OF NAMES

pp. 1—592

d'Abernon, Viscount	..	298, 301, 312, 327, 339, 345, 346, 355 <i>fn.</i> , 356, 381 <i>fn.</i> , 407 <i>fn.</i> , 409, 410, 411, 412, <i>fn.</i> , 437, 455.	
Adenauer, Dr	...	...	316, 450
Albrecht, Prince of Hohenzollern	...	...	500
Albrecht	...	...	66
Alfonso XIII, King of Spain	...	...	187
Alvensleben, Hans-Bodo von	..	...	543
Ammann, Max	...	...	426
Anschuetz, Georg	...	...	63, 516 <i>fn.</i>
Arco-Valley, Count von	..	...	247
Arnstaedt, H. Albert	...	...	94
Asquith, Rt. Hon. (later Lord Asquith and Oxford)		55, 58, 120, 178, 419	
Assmann	...	...	244
Auer	...	...	290
Auer-Goldschmiede	...	...	469
Aufhaeuser	..	...	577
August-Wilhelm, Prince ("Auwi") of Prussia	..	...	379
Baden, Prince Max von	..	114, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 240, 275, 294, 374	
Baeseler, General von	...	...	52
Baldwin, Lord	...	...	419
Ballin, Albert	...	...	59, 64, 292
Balfour, Rt. Hon. Arthur	..	...	153, 154
Baltrusch, Friedrich	...	...	581
Bartenstein	...	...	260
Barth	...	...	215, 217, 225, 229
Bassermann, Ernst	..	24 <i>fn.</i> , 28, 64, 74, 81, 82, 119, 292, 293, 349	
Bauer, Colonel	..	...	278, 280
Bauer, Gerhard	..	...	586, 587
Bauer, Gustav	...	101, 120, 191, 192, 240, 259, 261, 263, 283, 284, 298, 299	
Beatty, Admiral (later Lord Beatty)	..	...	76
Bechstein, Carl	..	...	430
Bebel, August	...	...	30, 31, 44, 47
Bell, Dr	..	...	264 <i>fn.</i>
Becker, Roman	...	...	260
Beeck, Gottfried zur (see Mueller von Hausen)	...	...	26
Behrens, Franz	..	...	581
Behrendt, General von	...	...	509
Benedict XV, Pope	..	87, 108, 111, 117, 134, 159, 160, 585	
Bergmann, Ernst	..	...	585
Bergson, Henri	...	...	12
Bermond-Avaloff	...	...	270
Bernhard, Georg	...	...	150, 293
Bernhardi, General Friedrich von	...	...	25
Bernstorff, Count von	...	...	91, 93 <i>fn.</i> , 272, 411
Bernstein, Eduard	...	...	54, 61, 63, 70, 101, 107
Bertram, Cardinal (Breslau)	...	...	538
Bethge	...	...	496, 509
Bethmann-Holwegg, Th. von	22 <i>fn.</i> , 28, 35, 37, 43, 46, 47, 65, 66, 67, 69, 72, 74, 75, 76, 82, 83, 86, 91, 92, 94, 96, 97, 108, 111, 112, 115, 119, 261, 272, 367, 590		
Bias, Anton	...	...	260
Binding, Karl	...	...	60
Bishop-Pasha	...	...	500

Bismarck, Prince Otto von	17, 21, 28, 61, 129, 248, 256, 300, 369, 370, 416, 417, 418, 461, 521, 570	
Blank, Dr		509
Bleichroeder		172
Bloehm, Walter		49
Blohm (Hamburg)		509
Blomberg, General W. von		565
Blum, Léon		490, 580
Bock von Wielfingen, General		509
Boeckel		577
Boehringer, Geh. Rat		509
Boerschmann		260
Boettcher		325, 518
Bonin, von		214
Bohle		359
Borah, William E.		517, 566
Bornhak, Prof. Konrad		66, 472
Bornstein, Josef		482, 483
Borsig, von		461
Bosch, Dr Robert		155
Bracht, Ernst		424, 535, 542
Bracke		31
Brandenburg, Prof. Erich		252, 472
Brandis, Dr		469, 509
Brandler		325
Brantung		101
Brauer, Theodor		581
Braun, Baron von		531
Braun, Otto	61, 353, 354, 376, 377, 378, 406, 421, 422, 427, 428, 470, 480, 500, 525, 535, 536, 566 <i>fn.</i> , 567, 576, 577	
Brauns		312, 371, 394
Brauweiler		461
Bredt		463
Breitscheid, Rudolf		291, 411, 510, 577
Briand, Aristide	6, 89 <i>fn.</i> , 365, 379, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 419, 429, 434, 439, 492, 496, 499	
Brentano, Lujo		472
Brockdorff, Count von		509
Brockdorff-Rantzau, Ulrich K., Count von	36, 232, 240, 251, 259, 264 <i>fn.</i> , 266, 267 <i>fn.</i> , 301	
Brouckere, Louis de		107, 387
Bruehl, Count von		500
Bruehing, Heinrich	9, 121, 262, 266, 304, 371, 440, 453, 454, 461, 462, 464, 465, 467, 468, 471, 475, 477, 478, 479, 480, 484, 489, 495, 496, 497, 498, 504, 505, 506, 507, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 527, 529, 530, 533, 535, 540, 544, 550, 552, 556, 561, 583, 588	
Bruns, Prof. Viktor		493
Buch		483
Buchrucker, Major		322, 323, 466, 467, 476
Bukharin		401
Buelow, Bernhard, Prince von		18 <i>fn.</i> , 31, 37
Buelow, Bernhard W. von		472
Buelow, General von		50, 368
Buelow-Schwante, von		509
Burns, John		473
Bussche-Haddenhausen, Baron Hilmar von dem		156
Bussche, Major von dem		190, 191
Cambon, Jules		19
Camphausen, Baron von		116 <i>fn.</i>
Canaris, Captain		481, 482
Capelle, Admiral von		64, 81, 124, 177 <i>fn.</i>
Caro, Kurt		238



Eschenh, Dr	.	.	.	.	..	.	290, 334
E-schweiler	.	.	.	.	.	.	585
Eucken, Rudolf	.	.	.	.	...	.	47
Falkenhayn, General von	.	...	...	...	51, 76, 77, 119, 255,	272	
Faulhaber, Cardinal	.	...	.	...	.	242, 317, 337	
Faupel, General	..	.	..	..	..	..	509
Feder, Gottfreid	.	...	...	...	...	426, 483	
Fehrenbach	115, 120, 148, 165, 242, 255, 263, 283, 284, 295, 296, 298						
Ferdinand, King	...	..	...	.	..	..	170, 173
Fichte	.	...	...	..	.	.	64
Fischbeck	.	..	.	.	.	138, 149, 165, 191	
Fischer, Eugen	.	.	.	...	...	...	472
Fischer, Richard	.	..	..	...	...	..	42, 66 <i>fn.</i> , 101
Flandin, Etienne	.	.	..	...	...	...	496
Foch, Ferdinand	.	..	..	169, 181, 207, 219, 265 <i>fn.</i> ,	270		
Foerster, Wilhelm	.	..	..	...	..	..	397, 407
Fokker	.	.	..	...	.	...	400
Forster, Albert (Danzig)	.	.	.	.	.	...	581
Fouche	..	.	..	...	.	...	393
Francke	.	.	...	.	.	...	250
François-Poncet	.	.	..	...	..	...	496
Franke, Otto	.	..	..	...	...	..	472, 483
Frank, Hans	..	...	.	.	..	...	527
Frederick the Great of Prussia	...	...	...	9 <i>fn.</i> ,	369, 370, 417, 570		
French, Sir John (later Lord and Field-Marshal)	...	.	..	.	..	..	58, 59
Freemantle, Admiral	..	.	...	...	...	...	259
Frick, Wilhelm	.	338, 426, 462, 483, 507, 508, 520, 530, 555, 565, 578					
Friedberg	.	...	.	...	..	...	133
Fritsch, Theodor von	..	...	...	...	..	...	26, 433
Frohme, Karl	..	.	...	..	...	...	260
Fromageot	..	...	..	...	...	...	365, 388
Gallwitz, General von	.	..	.	...	..	...	500, 509
Gamp-Massaunen	..	.	...	.	..	...	191
Gaus	...	...	.	...	..	...	365, 388
Gayl, Baron von	..	..	...	...	..	461, 508, 531, 542	
Gehl, Julius	...	..	.	...	...	...	260
Gemeinder	...	...	.	...	...	...	532
George V	...	..	..	.	...	...	36
Gerecke, Dr	...	..	..	...	...	...	565
Gerlach, Hellmuth von	.	...	...	...	...	...	11
Gerard, James W.	...	...	...	.	...	60, 91, 587	
Gessler	282, 284, 306, 312, 319, 326, 339, 355, 371, 387, 394, 401, 416, 482, 516 <i>fn.</i> ,	589					
Geyer, Curt (Senior)	..	...	..	.	..	...	33, 69, 70, 181
Gibson, Hugh	..	...	.	...	...	...	546
Glaise-Horstenau, von	...	...	...	...	.	...	472
Goebbels, Dr Joseph	25, 120, 427, 460, 475, 483, 501, 515 <i>fn.</i> ,	520, 526, 543, 552,					
	553, 559, 560, 563, 565, 568, 571						
Goering, Hermann	...	334, 406, 424, 427, 483, 527, 528, 542, 543, 545, 552, 557,					
	565, 570, 571, 576, 583, 588						
Goethe, Wolfgang von	.	...	...	...	..	...	47, 240
Gok, Dr.	...	...	...	...	...	...	509
Goltz, General Ruediger von der	...	...	...	...	268, 269, 270, 280, 509		
Goltz, Count von der	...	..	.	...	.	491, 496, 501, 508	
Gothein	...	.	...	...	...	...	165
Gottberg, Otto von	...	..	.	...	..	...	24 <i>fn.</i>
Gottstein, Dir.	...	..	...	...	...	...	509
Graefe, Gustrow von	...	..	...	...	...	94 <i>fn.</i> ,	426, 427
Gradnauer	.	..	...	...	...	...	120
Grandi, Dino	.	...	...	...	...	...	429



Grassmann	..	...	..	.	...	.	..	.	...	580
Grauert, Dr	.	...	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	509
Grey, Sir Edward	.	...	...	...	...	..	..	..	...	35, 58
Grimme	.	..	.	...	...	...	..	..	...	500
Groeber	..	.	.	..	..	74, 81, 168, 173, 176, 191, 254				
Groener, General von		165, 200, 207, 208, 209, 210, 216, 217, 218, 228, 229, 233, 245, 257, 258, 262, 264, 282, 284, 298, 299, 306, 312, 391, 416, 463, 479, 484, 490, 504, 506, 511, 518, 519, 520, 527, 528, 529, 530, 533								
Grosse, Dir.	.	.	...	..	...	..	..	...	...	509
Grothe, Hugo	..	..	...	...	...	..	..	...	..	360
Grunau, Baron Kurt von	...	.	...	...	...	..	..	...	...	83, 84
Grzesinski, Albert	..	..	220, 237, 421, 422, 423, 465, 507, 536, 576, 577							
Guttman, Herbert	...	..	..	..	...	..	..	...	...	64
Guerard, Theodor von	...	.	...	...	...	..	..	...	...	416, 436, 463
Guertner	...	...	..	..	..	..	..	..	...	508, 531, 565
Haase	...	38, 44, 55, 58, 61, 69, 70, 97 <i>fn.</i> , 105, 107, 119, 131, 132, 139, 160, 164, 179, 180, 191, 198, 205, 217, 229, 237, 240, 254, 261								
Habicht, K.	..	...	.	...	...	.	...	.	...	349
Haeckel, Ernst	..	.	.	..	..	..	..	..	..	47
Haensch, Conrad	...	..	.	...	...	..	..	..	..	58
Hagen	...	...	.	.	..	.	..	..	..	292
Hahn, J. R	...	..	...	.	..	..	..	..	..	509
Haller, Prof J	.	.	...	..	...	..	..	.	..	25
Hammerstein-Equord, General Guenther von						.	.	393, 502, 504		
Hanke, Friede	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	260		
Hannon, Patrick, M P			.	.	.	.	.	351		
Hard, Wilham	..	..	..	..	.	.	..	521, 522		
Hardenberg, Count von	...	...	.	..	..	.	..	342		
Hartung, F.	...	..	..	..	..	..	..	472		
Hauptmann, Gerhart	...	...	...	...	...	.	.	64, 516 <i>fn.</i>		
Hausen, Mueller (see Bleck, Gottfried zur)	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	26		
Hausmann, Conrad		51, 52, 108, 109 <i>fn.</i> , 121, 191, 194, 202, 203, 204, 251								
Havenstein, Rudolf	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	56, 325		
Hemannsberg	.	.	.	..	..	.	.	536		
Heine, Wolfgang	.	.	.	..	..	..	7, 42, 277, 293, 422			
Henkel	.	.	.	..	..	.	.	400		
Hentze	..	..	..	..	...	..	..	263 <i>fn.</i> , 312		
Henze	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	279, 327		
Held	..	..	...	..	..	..	..	345, 354, 563		
Helfferich, Karl	.	...	55, 56, 59, 111, 119, 120, 274, 280 <i>fn.</i> , 303, 308, 392							
Hellpach	..	..	..	..	...	...	...	354		
Helmholt (Hessen) von	...	...	..	..	..	..	..	509		
Henckell-Donnersmarck, Prince	...	...	...	...	..	..	..	292		
Henderson, Sir Nevile	..	..	...	...	...	...	..	35		
Henderson, Rt. Hon. Arthur	.	..	...	...	...	..	...	492, 493		
Henry, Prince of Prussia	..	..	...	...	...	..	...	36		
Hergt, Oskar	...	..	..	..	..	...	...	279, 394		
Hermes, Dr	...	...	...	..	...	...	...	312		
Herre, Paul	...	...	..	..	..	..	..	472		
Herriot, Edouard	...	...	...	..	..	..	..	350, 480, 533, 550		
Hertling, Count von	..	129, 131, 132, 133, 136, 137, 139, 140, 145, 154, 155, 158, 160, 163, 167, 170, 179, 180, 187, 190, 192								
Hertz, Friedrich	...	..	..	...	...	..	..	9, 24, 577, 578		
Hertzberg, von	..	...	..	...	..	..	...	509		
Herwegen, R. P. Ildefons	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	585		
Herzfeld	...	..	...	...	...	...	...	107		
Hesnard	...	..	...	...	...	...	...	385		
Hess, Rudolf	.	..	...	...	...	..	333, 338, 426, 429, 507			
Hesse, Max-René	..	..	..	...	...	...	..	379, 455		
Heubst	...	..	...	...	...	...	..	509		
Heydebrand ü. der Lasa, von	...	...	..	..	...	...	..	74, 167 <i>fn.</i>		

Heye, General Wilhelm von	..	..	..	210, 287, 390, 391, 393, 416, 491, 501
Hilferding	..	..	291, 294, 319, 324, 325, 416, 423, 453, 458, 512, 577	..
Himmler, Heinrich	..	..	..	362, 432
Hindenburg, Colonel Oskar von	..	..	..	390, 392, 393, 413, 414, 531, 570
Hindenburg und Beneckendorff, Field-Marshal, Paul von	..	..	..	50, 62, 77, 82, 85, 95, 111, 112, 118, 119, 125, 129, 145, 153, 155, 170, 180, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 192, 195, 197, 199, 200, 208, 209, 210, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 226, 228, 258, 262, 264, 265, 272, 274, 275, 276, 282, 324, 354, 355, 361, 362, 364, 370, 371, 376, 390, 391, 392, 393, 404, 412, 413, 416, 429, 434, 442, 447, 459, 460, 461, 463, 470, 471, 473, 484, 491, 492, 493, 503, 505, 506, 510, 515, 516, 520, 524, 525, 526, 527, 529, 530, 532, 535, 536, 538, 543, 544, 545, 546, 548, 551, 554, 556, 557, 558, 560, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 572, 579, 583
Hintze, Admral von	..	..	..	180, 201
Hirsch	..	..	..	42, 235
Hirschberg	..	..	..	217
Hirschfeld	..	..	..	274
Hirtseifer	..	..	..	500 <i>fn.</i>
Hitler, Adolf	..	9, 11, 12, 18, 48 <i>fn.</i> , 130, 199, 227, 266, 274, 279, 285, 287, 290, 293, 298, 329, 330, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 342, 343, 360, 362, 364, 365, 372, 378, 388, 392, 410, 420, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 434, 436, 442, 452, 458, 459, 475, 476, 477, 478, 483, 484, 485, 489, 496, 497, 506, 507, 508, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 518, 519, 520, 525, 526, 527, 530, 531, 537, 538, 540, 543, 544, 548, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 574, 575, 576, 579, 580, 581, 582, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592	..	..
Hoch	..	..	..	224
Hoersing, Otto	..	..	..	255, 260, 431
Hoepker-Aschoff	..	..	..	378, 500
Hoetzsch, Otto von	..	..	..	20, 25, 149, 293, 382, 411
Hofer	..	..	..	101, 107
Hoffmann	..	..	..	247, 248, 280
Hoffmann, General Max von	..	..	..	145
Hohenlohe, Prince Alexander	..	..	..	193
Hohenlohe-Ratibor (see under Ratibor)	..	..	..	—
Hohenzollerns—Albrecht, Prince of Prussia	..	..	..	500
August Wilhelm, Prince of Prussia	..	..	..	379
Eitel Friedrich, Prince of Prussia	..	..	..	509
Frederick II, The Great	..	..	..	417
Oscar, Prince of Prussia	..	..	..	503
Wilhelm, Kaiser (see under Wilham II)	..	..	..	—
Wilhelm, Crown Prince (see under Kronprinz)	..	..	..	—
Wilhelm, Son of Crown Prince	..	..	..	390
Hohlfeld, Johannes	..	..	..	180 <i>fn.</i>
Holt, M.P.	..	..	..	153
Holtzendorff, Admiral von	..	..	..	71, 72
Hoover, Herbert	..	..	..	445, 447, 448, 494, 495, 497, 498
Horn, General	..	..	..	503
Houghton, U.S.A. Ambassador	..	..	..	304, 345
Hossensfelder, Joachim	..	..	..	587
Huehnlein	..	..	..	475
Huenlich	..	..	..	487
Hugenberg, Alfred	..	9, 293, 342, 345, 430, 442, 458, 459, 461, 465, 466, 467, 468, 477, 496, 497, 501, 503, 507, 508, 516, 530, 551, 555, 564, 565	..	365, 388
Hurst, Sir Cecil	..	..	..	491, 500, 509
Hutier, General von	..	..	..	42, 347
Hue, Otto	..	..	..	..
Jaekch, Prof. Ernst	..	..	..	64, 155, 156
Jaentsch	..	..	..	509
Jagow, von	..	..	..	19, 37
Janson, Wilhelm	..	..	..	45
Jarres, Dr	..	..	..	353, 354, 449

# 614 GERMANY FROM " DEFEAT TO CONQUEST "

Jaurès, Jean	..	..	.	.	...	..	..	31, 40, 105
Joel, Dr	..	...	..	...	...	..	..	506
Joffe, Adolf	..	...	.	...	...	..	..	145, 161 <i>fn</i>
Joos	..	...	.	.	...	..	..	552
Jorns	...	...	...	...	...	...	..	481, 482
Junkers, Prof.	.	...	..	...	...	...	...	399, 401, 516 <i>fn</i> .
Kaas, Monsignor	..	...	..	411, 417, 454, 489, 532, 551, 553, 574, 583, 588				
Kabisch, General Ernst	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	216, 472
Kaempf	...	...	...	.	...	...	...	54
Kahl, Prof.	..	...	...	.	...	...	64, 511, <i>fn.</i> , 516 <i>fn.</i>	
Kahr, von	..	...	..	..	280, 290, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 345			
Kampf, Prof.	...	...	...	.	...	...	...	64
Kaiser (see Wilhelm II)	..	...	..	...	...	...	...	—
Kalckreuth, Count von	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	496
Kameneff	..	...	...	...	.	...	...	144
Kant, Immanuel	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	47
Kapp, Wolfgang	118, 167, <i>fn.</i> , 199, 272, 278, 280, 281, 282, 288, 289, 295, 324, 336, 339							
Kardorff, von	...	...	...	...	..	...	501, 511 <i>fn</i>	
Karo, Georg	..	...	..	...	...	...	...	472
Karski, Julian	..	...	.	...	.	...	...	69
Kastl	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	437
Kautsky, Karl	..	...	.	...	30, 47, 61, 101, 107, 250, 294			
Keim, General von	.	...	..	...	.	...	22, 123	
Kemnitz, Frau	...	.	...	..	.	...	577	
Keüdel	..	...	..	...	.	...	394	
Kerensky	..	..	.	...	..	...	142, 144, 145	
Kern, Fritz	..	...	.	...	...	...	472	
Kerri, H	..	...	.	...	...	...	535	
Kossler, Count Harry	...	...	...	...	..	...	297	
Keynes, Prof. John Maynard (now Lord Keynes)	..	..	...	...	..	...	517	
Keyserling, Count Hermann	.	..	..	...	...	...	516 <i>fn.</i>	
Kiefel	.	..	...	...	..	...	247	
Kirdorf, Emil	.	...	...	...	..	...	64, 429, 501	
Killing, Baron Manfred von	.	...	...	...	..	...	571	
Kitchener, Lord	.	...	...	...	..	...	58	
Klagges	.	.	...	...	...	...	508	
Kleist-Schmenzin, von	..	...	...	...	...	...	509	
Kluck, General von	...	.	...	...	...	...	49, 293	
Knilling, von	...	..	...	...	...	...	333, 345	
Koehler Wilhelm	...	...	.	...	...	...	260, 394	
Koch, Gaulerter	...	..	...	...	...	...	548	
Koch-Hamburg, Prof.	...	..	...	...	...	...	509	
Koch, Dr Wilhelm	...	...	...	...	...	...	394	
Koch, Erich	.	...	...	...	...	...	416	
Koester	..	...	...	...	...	...	283	
Korsch, Dr	..	...	...	...	...	...	382	
Krassin	..	...	.	...	.	...	301	
Krause, Dr	...	...	..	...	...	...	220	
Krebs	...	...	...	...	...	...	531	
Kreiser, Walter	...	...	...	...	...	...	403, 404	
Krestinski	...	...	...	...	...	...	380	
Kreth, Geheimrat	...	...	...	...	...	...	509	
Kreuger, Ivar	...	...	...	...	...	...	457	
Kriebel, Lieut.-Colonel	...	...	...	...	...	...	324, 338	
Krieger-Winterhall	...	...	...	...	...	...	509	
Kriegsheim, von	..	...	...	...	...	...	509	
Kronen, Peter	...	...	...	...	...	...	59, 260	
Kronprinz, Son of Wilhelm II	59, 112, 115, 119, 124, 187, 208 209, 210, 220, 272, 328, 329, 347, 357, 358, 363, 364, 390, 415, 439, 491, 527, 568							
Kruckenberg, Dr	..	...	..	...	...	...	509	
Krupp von Bohlen	..	...	...	...	...	20, 292, 301, 302, 402		
Krupskaya	...	...	...	...	...	...	143	

## 615

Kuehenthal	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	508
Kuehlmann, Richard von	..	120, 133, 145, 148, 149, 171, 178, 179, 180								509
Kuehne, General	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	509
Kueltz	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	491
Kuenstler	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	401, 577
Kuerbis, Heinrich	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	260
Laband, Prof.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	60
Lammers, Min Dir	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	509
Lamprecht, Prof. Karl	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	25
Landauer	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	223
Landsberg	..	...	123, 215, 217, 223, 229, 230, 234, 237, 242							242
Lansing	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	531
Laval, Pierre	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	496, 499
Layton, Sir Walter	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	496
Ledebour	...	...	34, 70, 97, 101, 134, 139, 164, 175, 205, 223, 230, 291, 313							313
Ledexer	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	294
Leers, Johann von	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	477
Legien, Carl	..	...	...	...	...	...	42, 62, 101, 120, 347			347
Lehmann	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	130
Leicht	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	510
Leiden, Ott zur	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	398
Leinert	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	42
Leipart, Theodor	..	...	...	...	...	...	553, 559, 579, 580			580
Lenin	..	...	...	...	...	...	134, 142, 143, 149, 168, 409			409
Lensch, Paul	..	...	...	...	...	...	61, 62, 64, 192			192
Lersner, von	..	...	...	...	...	...	190, 191, 563			563
Lequis, General	..	...	...	...	...	...	228, 229, 232			232
Levetzow, Admiral von	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	509
Levi, Paul	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	403
Lewald, Dr	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	516
Ley, Dr	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	581
Lex, Ritter von	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	575
Liebert, General von	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	23
Liebknocht, Karl	..	...	8, 11, 30, 44, 50, 54, 55, 57, 67, 68, 69 <i>fn.</i> , 70, 80, 214, 223, 236, 237, 481, 482							80, 31
Liebknecht, Wilhelm	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	239
Liebknecht, Theodor	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	87
Lincoln, Abraham	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	496, 509
Lind	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	192
Linsingen, General von	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	509
Lippe, Prince zu	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	64
Iszt, Prof. F. von	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	380, 521
Litvinoff, Maxim	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	380, 521
Lloyd-George, Rt. Hon. David	87, 121, 130, 134, 138, 156, 160, 219, 251, 273, 299, 306									580
Loche	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	580
Lodahl, Gertrud	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	260
Loebe, Paul	..	...	271, 365, 414, 417, 418, 472, 478, 517, 542, 544, 577, 578							578
Loebell, von	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	52, 376
Loewenstein	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	577
Lossow, General von	..	...	...	...	...	...	335, 336, 337, 338, 339			339
Louis XIV	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	20
Loucheur	..	...	...	...	...	...	296, 299, 300			300
Low, Sir Sidney	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	220
Lubbe, van der	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	567
Ludendorff, General Erich	..	...	50, 76, 77, 78, 79, 83, 93 <i>fn.</i> , 111, 112, 119, 124, 125, 128, 129, 145, 155, 168, 179, 180, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 195, 199, 200, 257, 262, 272, 274, 275, 278, 282, 293, 294, 318, 334, 336, 337, 338, 355, 391, 414, 426, 429, 460, 563, 586							586
Ludendorff, Frau	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	260
Luebbring, Joseph	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	492, 500, 509
Lueningk, Baron von	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	509

Luettwitz, General von	...	232, 233, 246, 272, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 288, 296, 304, 491, 509	
Lukas, Frau	. . .	...	577
Luppe	. . .	...	583
Luther, Dr	. . .	312, 316, 319, 324, 325, 339, 353, 367, 368, 370, 371, 372, 377, 498, 532, 571	
Lutz, H.	. . .	...	472
Luxemburg, Rosa	...	.. 8, 42, 45, 69, 80, 233, 236, 237, 382, 481, 482	
Lvov, Prince	. . .	...	142
MacDonald, Rt. Hon. Ramsay	..	...	350, 440
Mackensen, Field-Marshal von	...	77, 170, 265, 272, 391, 432, 491, 501, 503	
Maercker, General	...	...	232, 234, 240, 280
Magnot	..	...	480
Mahraun, Lieut. Arthur	. . .	...	432, 433
Maier (Wuerttemberg) Dr	. . .	...	575
Maltzan, von	. . .	...	301, 302, 355, 366 <i>fn.</i>
Mann, Ritter von	. . .	...	204, 220
Mannhardt, J. W.	...	...	359
Marauhn, Arthur	...	...	432, 433
Marcard, Dr	...	...	482
Marcks, Erich	. . .	...	25
Margerie, de	...	...	475
Marguloman	. . .	...	170
Margueritte, Victor	. . .	...	473
Marx, Lieut.-General	. . .	...	397
Marx, Karl	..	...	47, 139
Marx, Dr Wilhelm		316, 339, 341, 349, 350, 352, 353, 354, 371, 372, 381, 382, 394, 414, 415, 416, 464	
Massigli, René	. . .	...	386
Matsudeira	...	...	406
Mayer-Kaufbaeuren	. . .	...	148
Mayr, Captain	..	...	329
Mecklenburg, Grand Duke Adolf	. . .	...	64
Mecklenburg, Prince Johann Albrecht	. . .	...	118
Meesmann (Mainz)	...	...	509
Mehring, Franz	...	...	42, 69 <i>fn.</i> , 223
Meinecke, Friedrich	..	...	25, 63, 86
Meissner, Otto	...	...	393, 463, 557
Melcher	. . .	...	536
Mellon Andrew	...	...	496
Mertius	. . .	...	469 <i>fn.</i>
Metzsch, von	...	...	504
Meydenhauer	..	...	509
Meyer, Ernst	. . .	...	69 <i>fn.</i> , 223
Meyer, W.	. . .	...	129 <i>fn.</i>
Meyer-Detmold	. . .	...	509
Meyer-Quade	. . .	...	483
Michaels, Dr	...	111, 112, 114, 115, 117, 119, 124, 125, 272	
Michelsen, Paul	...	...	260
Middendorf	...	...	509
Milhoukov	...	...	142
Minnoux	...	...	429
Mitchell	...	...	351
Moehl, General von	. . .	...	509
Moeller	. . .	...	509
Moldenhauer	. . .	...	453, 461, 463
Molkenbuhr	. . .	...	66 <i>fn.</i> , 101, 224
Moltke, Field-Marshal Count Helmuth von	. . .	...	51, 64, 77, 293, 525
Moltke, General Helmuth von (jun.)	. . .	...	50, 51, 293
Morgan, Brig-General J. H.	...	...	474 <i>fn.</i>
Morgan, J. Pierpont	...	...	420
Morgenthau, Henry	. . .	...	592 <i>fn.</i>

## 617

Morley, Lord	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	473
Morozowicz, Captain von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	503, 509
Moses, Dr	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	81 <i>fn.</i>
Mosse, Rudolf	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	64
Mueller, August	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	347
Mueller, General	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	325, 326, 327
Mueller, Hermann	40, 101, 240, 255, 259, 283, 313, 416, 420, 422, 423, 425, 442, 453, 461, 463, 476, 524	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Mueller, Richard	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	246
Mueller-von Hausen	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	26
Mueller-Franken	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	155, 264 <i>fn.</i>	368
Mueller-Fulda	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	109
Mueller-Meinigen	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	74
Muenchhausen, von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	509
Muenster, Count von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 <i>fn.</i>
Muenzenberg	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	377
Mümm, von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	122, 138
Murr	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	571
Mussolini, Benito	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	440, 507, 566, 589
Mutschmann	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	571
Nadolny, Rudolf, August von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	548
Napoleon I	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	20
Naumann, Friedrich	9, 21, 48, 67, 68, 85, 124, 155, 156, 165 <i>fn.</i> , 256, 294, 433	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Needra, Pastor	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	270
Nouhaus	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	353
Neurath, Baron von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	531, 548, 550, 562, 565	..
Nicholas II, Tsar of Russia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	36, 46, 142, 409
Niemoller, Pastor	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	587 <i>fn.</i>
Nollet, General	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	306
Nord, Dir.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	509
Norman, Montague	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	363
Noske, Gustav	62, 63, 180, 203, 204, 205, 206, 230, 231, 233, 234, 236, 237 <i>fn.</i> , 238, 240, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 248, 249, 251, 258, 259, 262, 264, 270, 271, 279, 280, 282, 327, 335, 355, 397 <i>fn.</i> , 428, 516 <i>fn.</i> , 537	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Oberfohren	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	465, 508
Oehme, W.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	42, 238
Oettinghaus	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	488
Oldenburg-Januschau, von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	153, 543
Oldershausen, General von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	279
Ollenhauer	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	577
Oncken, Hermann	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	21 <i>fn.</i> , 25, 63, 516 <i>fn.</i>	..
Oskar, Prince of Hohenzollern	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	503
Ossietzky, Karl von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11, 403, 404, 407
Osten-Sacken, Major von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	123
Otto, Bernhard	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	581
Oven, General von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	279
Paasche, Dr	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	147
Pabst, Captain	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	282, 288
Pacelli, Mgr. Eugenio Papal Nuncio	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	108, 117, 587
Painlevé, Paul	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	480
Papen, Baron Franz von	266, 304, 371, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 542, 543, 544, 545, 550, 552, 554, 555, 556, 558, 560, 561, 563, 565, 567, 572, 585	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Parker, Gilbert	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	350
Payer, von	..	..	..	..	..	64, 65, 115, 133, 167, 191, 194, 199	..	..	..
Penck, Albrecht	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	360
Pershing, General	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	219
Pestalozzi, Count von	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	218

Petersen, Dr O. ..	129 <i>fn.</i>
Pfeffer, Captain	475
Philip II of Spain	20
Pflugk-Hartung, Captain, Lieut. von	482
Pfundtner, Geheimrat	509
Pieck, Wilhelm	501 <i>fn.</i>
Planck	516 <i>fn.</i>
Platten	143
Pless, Prince von	83
Plessen, General von	210
Poensgen, Geheimrat	509
Poincaré, Raymond	299, 300, 344, 347, 350, 419, 472
Pokorny, Franz	260
Portmann	488
Pretzsche, Hugo	42
Preuss, Hugo	242, 267
Puonder	386
Puttlitz, Baron zu	94 <i>fn.</i> , 167 <i>fn.</i>
Raeder, Admiral	504
Radek, Karl	301
Radbruch, Prof. Gustav	319
Railie, B. Hugh	539
Rakovsky, Christian	301
Ranke, Prof. Leopold	25
Rantzau (see Brockdorff)	194
Rathenau, Emil	292
Rathenau, Walter	26, 52, 64, 78, 79, 107, 254, 290, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 303, 304, 314, 333, 392, 512
Ratibor, Duke of	500
Rauschnung, Hermann	333
Ravené, Geheimrat	509
Rechberg, Arnold	481
Rechenberg, Baron von	165
Reck, Walter	260
Regendanz, Dr	509
Reichert, Dr	129 <i>fn.</i> , 370
Reimann	411
Reimer	25
Reimecke (Chemnitz)	509
Reinhard, Colonel (later General)	231, 255, 257, 258, 271, 278, 432
Reinhardt, Max	64, 220
Rennenkampf	51
Reuter, Admiral von	259
Rheinbaben, Baron R. von	317, 351, 411, 441
Ribbentrop	448 <i>fn.</i>
Riesser, Dr	19
Riedel	214
Reventlow, Count E. zu	383, 387, 426, 427, 472, 477, 483, 509
Riddell, Lord	251
Runner	577
Rintelen, Franz von	531
Roechling	20
Roedern, Count von	133, 190
Roehm, Ernst	33, 338, 427, 432, 476, 527, 543
Roesicke, Gustav	94, 153, 167 <i>fn.</i>
Rohde, Paul	509
Rohrbach, Paul	21, 516, 544
Roland, Walther	403
Roosevelt, Franklin D.	122
Rosen, Friedrich von	298
Rosenberg, Alfred	27, 333

Rosenberg, Arthur	42, 112 <i>fn.</i> , 115 <i>fn.</i> , 141 <i>fn.</i> , 312, 315 <i>fn.</i> , 327 <i>fn.</i> , 340, 391 <i>fn.</i> , 422, 462, 585, 586, 589	
Rosenberg, Dr von		332
Rosenfeld, Dr Kurt		488
Roszbach, Lieutenant		288, 334
Rothermere, Lord		479
Ruebenach (see Baron Eltz von Ruebenach)		—
Ruehle, Otto		57, 70
Rundstedt, General von		533
Runge		481
Rupprecht, Crown Prince of Bavaria		334, 337
Russky, General		51
Rynneck, Frau		577
Salm, Dr		516
Salm-Horstmar, Prince zu		509
Sassenbach		101
Saukel		571
Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Duke of		379, 491
Schacht, Hjalmar	9, 310, 325, 363, 372, 373, 425, 433, 436, 451, 452, 453, 458, 459, 484, 490, 501, 507, 508, 509, 510, 516, 530, 557, 559, 571	
Schaefer, Prof. Dietrich		25
Schaetzl		394, 416, 463, 506
Scheer, Admiral		211, 272
Scheidemann, Philipp	33, 35 <i>fn.</i> , 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 48, 58, 62, 66 <i>fn.</i> , 74, 75, 80, 95, 96, 101, 104, 115, 119, 120, 122, 131, 138, 159, 164, 165, 191, 192, 194, 195, 198, 202, 206, 207, 209, 211 <i>fn.</i> , 212 <i>fn.</i> , 213, 214, 215, 216, 223, 229, 230, 231, 234, 235, 237, 242, 243, 254, 259, 264 <i>fn.</i> , 271, 305, 320 <i>fn.</i> , 377, 397, 399, 425, 485, 550, 551	
Schelo, Baron Arnold von		116 <i>fn.</i> , 463, 468
Schemann, Ludwig		25
Schouch, General von		192, 204, 220, 227, 294
Schule, von		353, 394, 506, 511
Schiff, Viktor		472 <i>fn.</i>
Schiffer		74, 263 <i>fn.</i>
Schiller, Friedrich		220, 461
Schippel, Max		61
Schlange-Schoeningen		511
Schleicher, General von	228, 266, 304, 322, 371, 390, 391, 392, 463, 505, 515, 518, 529, 530, 531, 532, 536, 537, 539, 540, 543, 547 <i>fn.</i> , 548, 556, 558, 559, 561, 563, 564, 565	
Schlenker, Dr		509
Schlieben, von		353
Schlieffen, General Alfred Count von		51, 76
Schmidt, Robert	42, 62, 242, 249, 319, 500 <i>fn.</i>	
Schneller		377
Schober, Dr		492, 493
Schoen, Baron von		36
Schoeneich-Carolath, Prince von		116, 487
Schoenerer, von		329
Schorlemer, Baron von		500
Schreiber		500 <i>fn.</i>
Schroeder (Banker, Cologne)		430, 563
Schroeder, G F (Banker, Bremen)		495
Schroeder, Louise		260
Schubert, von		355
Schuckert		292
Schuecking, Dr		261
Schuessler, Prof.		484
Schulenburg, General Count F. von		219
Schulte, Cardinal (Cologne-Aachen)		582
Schultz-Bromberg		263 <i>fn.</i>
Schultz, Heinrich		268



Schulz, Hermann	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	260
Schulz, Wilhelm	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	260
Schuhmann, Walter	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	581
Schuman, Frederick L.	...	...	...	...	...	214, 221, 237	<i>fn.</i>	
Schweitzer, von	...	...	...	...	...	...	30	<i>fn.</i>
Schwern, Count von	...	...	...	...	...	94	<i>fn.</i> , 167	<i>fn.</i>
Schwern-Krosigk, Count von	...	...	...	...	...	...	531, 565	
Schweyer, Dr	...	...	...	...	...	...	290	
Seeberg	...	...	...	...	...	...	122, 135	
Seeckt, General Hans von	9, 265, 278, 279, 281, 282, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 296, 304, 335, 338, 339, 340, 387, 390, 391, 398, 401, 408, 434, 473, 474, 484, 491, 502, 509							
Seeckt, Frau von	...	...	...	...	...	...	339	
Seeger	...	...	...	...	...	...	480	
Seger	...	...	...	...	...	...	243	
Seipel, Ignaz	...	...	...	...	...	...	417, 418	
Seisser, Colonel von	...	...	...	...	...	...	336, 337	
Seldte	...	...	387, 431, 491, 496, 501, 507, 508, 516, 554, 565					
Sender, Frau Toni	...	...	...	...	...	...	577	
Sering, Max	...	...	...	...	...	...	406, 516	
Severing, Karl	...	328, 378, 416, 422, 489, 500, 507, 519, 535, 536, 537, 538, 576						
Seyda, Z.	...	...	...	...	...	...	191	
Seydewitz	...	...	...	...	...	...	488	
Sharpe, American Ambassador	...	...	...	...	...	...	88, 89	
Shipstead, U.S.A. Senator	...	...	...	...	...	...	473	
Sieber	...	...	...	...	...	...	509	
Siemens-Schuckert	...	...	...	...	...	...	292	
Siemens, August	...	...	...	...	...	...	488	
Simon, Anna	...	...	...	...	...	...	260	
Simon, Sir John	...	...	...	...	...	...	561, 562	
Simons, Dr Walter	...	...	...	...	...	284, 296, 298, 301		
Simpfendorfer	...	...	...	...	...	510, 575, 576		
Sklarek	...	...	...	...	...	...	453	
Smuts	...	...	...	...	...	...	160	
Sogomeier	...	...	...	...	...	...	509	
Sokolnikov, G.	...	...	...	...	...	...	161	
Solf, Wilhelm Heinrich	...	...	...	64, 65, 160, 192, 220, 231, 247, 516				
Sollmann, W.	...	...	...	...	...	...	319, 577	
Souchon, Admiral	...	...	...	...	...	...	204, 205	
Spahn, Martin	...	...	...	...	75, 81, 82, 96, 120, 124, 130			
Spangenberg	...	...	...	...	...	...	398	
Spann, Othmar	...	...	...	...	...	...	21	<i>fn.</i>
Spee, Count von	...	...	...	...	...	...	55	
Spengler, Oswald	...	...	...	...	...	...	591	<i>fn.</i>
Stadler, Dr	...	...	...	...	...	...	509	
Stadthagen	...	...	...	...	...	34, 70, 101, 107		
Stahl	...	...	...	...	...	...	577	
Stahn	...	...	...	...	...	...	145	
Stamp, Sir Josiah	...	...	...	...	...	...	517	
Stampfer, Friedrich	...	...	...	...	42, 457	<i>fn.</i> , 538, 577, 578		
Steed, Wickham	...	...	...	...	...	...	419	
Stegerwald, A.	...	...	...	...	262, 304, 436, 463, 506, 511, 552			
Stein, Prof. Ludwig	...	...	...	...	...	...	292	
Stein, von	...	...	...	...	...	...	11	
Steinkopf, Willy	...	...	...	...	...	...	260	
Steinmann-Bucher	...	...	...	...	...	...	19	
Stelling	...	...	...	...	...	...	577	
Stennes, Captain	...	...	...	...	...	...	475	
Stimson	...	...	...	...	...	...	496	
Stinnes, Hugo	78, 172, 284, 292, 293, 295, 296, 301, 304, 310, 311, 316, 318, 347, 429							
Stoehr	...	...	...	...	...	...	483, 504	
Strasser, Gregor	...	...	...	426, 427, 476, 480, 507, 541, 553, 559, 560				
Strasser, Otto	...	...	...	...	333, 427, 475, 477, 483, 520, 537			
Streicher, Julius	...	...	...	...	...	...	426	

Stresemann, Gustav	... 5, 6, 9, 28, 75, 81, 102, 111, 122, 124, 131, 138, 140, 149, 159, 160, 165, 166, 167, 169, 175, 176, 179, 191, 194, 208, 241, 254, 261, 284, 292, 293, 297, 302, 303, 314, 316, 318, 319, 320, 325, 326, 327, 328, 335, 336, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366 <i>fn.</i> , 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 376, 379, 380, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 391, 392, 394, 395, <i>fn.</i> , 397, 402, 407, 411, 412, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 434, 438, 439, 440, 441, 449, 450, 459, 512, 540, 561, 590	
Stroebe	...	205, 488
Stuelpnagel, General von	...	504, 546
Stuert	...	483
Sturdee, Sir Frederick	...	55
Suedekum	...	42, 64, 165, 293
Suttner, Baroness Bertha von	...	57 <i>fn.</i>
Sybel, von	...	25, 508 <i>fn.</i>
Sydow, von	...	68
Szogeny, Count	...	35
Talleyrand, Prince	...	296, 342, 384
Tchucherin	...	300, 380
Thaelmann	...	354, 526
Thumme, Friedrich	...	62
Thyssen, August	...	564
Thyssen, Fritz	20, 64, 280, 292, 310, 339, 385, 387, 388, 392, 425, 426, 428, 429, 430, 492, 503	
Tiedemann, Colonel von	...	504
Tillesen, Vice-Admiral	...	481 <i>fn.</i>
Tirpitz, Grand Admiral, Alfred von	22, 59, 71, 118, 119, 131, 272, 354	
Toller	...	223
Torgler	...	542
Traub, Pastor	...	503
Treitschke	...	25, 415
Treviranus	463, 464, 471, 472, 479, 486, 489, 506	
Trimborn	...	138, 158, 191
Trotsky, Leon	144, 145, 146, 149, 150, 159, 161, 167	
Tschurschky, von	...	35 <i>fn.</i>
Tweedmouth, Lord	...	35 <i>fn.</i>
Uhanov, Vladimir-Ilyitch (see Lenin)	...	—
Uhtz	...	420
Ulmanis	...	247, 268, 269, 270
Vallentin, Mrs Antonina	...	303
Vandervelde, Emile	...	107, 387
Van Langenhove, F.	...	19 <i>fn.</i>
Vietinghoff-Scheel, Baron von	...	23, 509
Voegeler, Oberstudienrat, A	...	129 <i>fn.</i>
Voegler, Dir. Albert	316, 347, 430, 436, 437, 454	
Vogel, Hans	...	577, 578
Vogel, Lieutenant	...	481, 482
Vogtherr	...	70
Vollmoeller	...	64
Waechter, Lieut.-General	...	509
Wagner, Richard	...	10 <i>fn.</i> , 483
Wagner, S.	...	571
Waldeck-Pyrmont, Prince of	...	379
Wangenheim, Baron von	...	116 <i>fn.</i> , 509
Wanninger, Dr	...	403 <i>fn.</i>
Warmbold, Dr	...	506, 531
Warburg, Paul	...	517

Warmuth, Dr	..	...	...	...	.	..	.	123, 175
Washington, George		...	...	...	.	.	.	524
Watter, General	..	...	..	...		..	.	282
Weber, August	..	..	...	..	...	.	...	510
Weber, Edmund	..	...	.	.	..	...	..	26
Wegerer, Alfred von		...	...	...	..	...	..	472
Weidemann (Insterburg)		...	...	...	...	...	.	470
Weiss	...	..	.	...	...	...	...	536
Weissmann	...	...	.	...	..	...	.	376, 386
Wells, H. G.	..	...	.	.	.	..	..	17
Wels, Otto		..	...	..	228, 538, 554, 573, 576, 577,	578		
Wendhausen, Dr	..	..	...	...	..	...	...	508
Wengels	..	..	...	..	.	...	..	101, 107
Werth, de	..	..	...	.	.	.	.	509
Westarp, Count Cuno von		..	74, 81, 82, 94, <i>fn.</i> ,	112, 116, 119, 122, 148, 165,				
			167 <i>fn.</i> , 169, 174, 175, 178, 179, 191, 198, 377, 378, 430, 511					
Westphal	..	...	...	...	..	.	.	577
Wiedfeldt	..	.	...	...	...	.	..	346
Wiemer, Dr	..	...	.	...	..	.	..	160, 174
Wilhelmina, Queen of the Netherlands							.	187
William II, German Kaiser		8, 11, 12, 18, 35 <i>fn.</i> , 39, 40, 42, 47, 85, 86, 98, 108, 109,						
		112, 134, 145, 170, 177, 180, 181, 187, 188, 194, 195, 196, 197 <i>fn.</i> , 199, 200,						
		201, 204, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 214, 220, 238, 241, 242, 245, 273, 274,						
		292, 296, 298, 313, 378, 379, 492, 524, 569						
Wilson, Woodrow		76, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 95, 96, 100, 121, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139,						
		141, 153, 154, 166, 189, 196, 197 <i>fn.</i> , 199, 200, 207, 214, 219, 251, 340, 473, 522						
Wirth, Albrecht	.	..	.	...	..		.	25
Winnig, August	.	.	.	.	..	.	.	63
Wulle	...	.	.	.	..	.	.	426
Wundt, Prof.	...	.	..	...	...	.	.	509
Wurmwiedler, Major	.	..	..	..	.	.	.	501 <i>fn.</i>
Young, Owen D.	...	420, 436, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 445, 452, 458, 459, 460, 461,						
		463, 474, 480, 483, 534, 541, 555						
Zeigner, Dr	..	...	...	...	...	..	..	325, 326
Zeppeln, Count Ferdinand von		...			..	.	.	71
Ziegler	..	.	.	.	..	.	.	488
Ziothen, General von	..	.	.	...	..	..	.	509
Zitzewitz, von	..	...	..	...	...	...	..	509
Zoergiebel	..	..	...	...	...	...	..	424, 465